



Stonewall Farm Quest

Keene, NH

Special Features: Natural

Physical Difficulty: Easy

Duration: 0:45

Bring: Field guide, binoculars, field journal, water

To get there: At the 'T' intersection where Route 101 ends and Routes 9, 10, and 12 combine to by-pass Keene, take Route 9 west toward Brattleboro. About three miles later, turn right on the Chesterfield Road. Travel up Chesterfield Rd. for a mile and turn right into Stonewall Farm Driveway. Follow the drive up to the parking lot.

Overview:

Do you remember when milk was delivered to your doorstep with that thick layer of cream on top? When sheep grazed throughout the fields of New England? When vegetables were picked fresh and you knew where they came from? Step into the past, present and future of agriculture and your environment with a visit to Stonewall Farm, a non-profit, member-supported educational facility and working dairy located in Keene. A wide variety of programs, workshops and special events are made available to the public throughout the year.

Clues:

Welcome to Stonewall! We all say 'Hello!'
With a cluck, and a neigh, and a moo, don't you know.
Begin your Quest looking all around, high and low
Do you see some birds clucking? There you should go

Our chickens are an organic laying flock. They are a mix of different breeds. The most interesting breed is the Turken, which is the chicken with a bare neck. This breed actually has fewer feathers making them easy to pluck. Can you spot a Turken in our flock? The flock is mostly female chickens, called hens. But there is a rooster here too. Can you find him? The rooster watches over the hens while they scratch and

peck for bugs all day. He will settle disputes between hens and cluck at them to run for cover if he senses danger. He'll also cluck to his favorite hens when he finds a good spot for eating. Watch and listen closely and you might hear him talking to his "girls."

Just a little bit further you'll see lots of fluff
The cuddliest of creatures. We can't love them enough!
Next door are the birds that quack but don't cluck
No, not a chicken. You're right...it's a duck!

Our rabbits are Angora rabbits, a breed specifically raised for their luxurious fiber. We harvest their fiber by simply giving them a haircut every 3 months. A healthy, high producing Angora can provide nearly a pound of wool a year. Angora wool is lighter and warmer than sheep wool. Angora rabbits have very specific diets to help them digest the wool they swallow when grooming. Please do not upset their tummies by feeding them grass or other items. Careful! Your finger looks a lot like a carrot and if you hold it out to them they might take a nibble to see what sort of treat you are offering!

Now for a hike. Head east down the road
Keep your eyes open for birds or a toad
This is the wetland. There are lots who live here:
Beaver, frogs, turtles and even a deer.
Follow the signs, on the right they should be
Turn off the road and a big tree you'll see
Give her a hug and admire her height
Then on to the boardwalk off to the right

The large tree is called a Bull Pine. Bull Pines are created when a Bull Weevil (a tiny insect) burrows in and damages the upper most bud on a pine tree. The tree can no longer grow up, so it puts all it's energy into growing out, making an interesting branching structure. This tree is probably close to 200 years old and has been here as long as this property has been farmed, maybe even longer. It is much older than the trees surrounding it because all the other trees were cut down at one time for lumber. This tree was left standing because its unusual branching made it a lousy choice to harvest.

This wetland was created by beaver several years ago. Notice on the right of the boardwalk the old beaver dam running along the edge of the pond. If you look, you can probably spy some branches that have been chewed on by beavers. Move quietly and keep your eyes open and you may spy frogs or salamanders living in this wetland. There are also

plenty of bugs such as water striders, dragonflies and other aquatic insects.

Now back to the road from the direction you came
Past the big building. It all looks the same
Keep walking the road with the brook on your side
The pond on your left to where more animals reside

Our sheep and goats are very friendly and love a taste of dandelion or long grass picked from the side of the path. The sheep are sheared each spring and their wool used for our educational programs. Sheep wool is a popular fiber for making clothing because its insulation structure makes it warm even when wet, and helps keep you cool in hot weather. It is also flame resistant and resists mildew.

Back a few paces, now cross the brook
No time for playing, in the garden have a look
Lots of herbs are growing. Smell their sweet smell
Some crops and some flowers. Do you know their names well?
Walk down the rows, and you might see something you know
Vegetables and fruits, so this is how they grow!

The first rows you come to, farthest from the road, are our herbs. Here you can find lavender, rosemary, basil, oregano, catnip, chives and other herbs. You can enjoy the aroma of many herbs by gently brushing your hand against them and cupping your hand to your nose. Try brushing rosemary, lavender or thyme. You'll find the mint growing near the brush between the playground and garden. Pick 1 leaf per person and smell or taste the mint. All plants in the mint family have square stems. Feel the stem of the mint plants, then see if you can find another 'mint cousin'. (Hint: cats really love a 'mint cousin' herb!)

Let's keep traveling, lots more to see
We must cross the road so look carefully
Now on to the barn and, whoa! You can see
Some big stalls and yards. For whom might they be?

The farm is home to several private horses owned by staff members, as well as the farm's own team of Belgian draft horses, Prince and Magic. Prince and Magic pull our wagon and sleigh for hayrides, and also help with farm work such as plowing fields, hauling trees, and harvesting potatoes. Watch the fence near the horse pen. It is electric and can give a startling zap! If Prince and Magic are not in their pen when you

arrive, they are most likely working or enjoying a day in the pasture eating grass.

Find another barn, this one also is red
The smell is quite strong many have said
Here you'll see where the ladies each have their own stall
They give milk twice daily, but that's not all!
Their manure is precious. We pile it out back
Turn it to compost, and then it turns black
But we're not done with it yet. You know where it goes?
Onto our fields and our gardens where everything grows!

Our newest dairy girls live in the calf huts in front of the dairy barn. Here they are well socialized by visitors so they grow up to trust people and look forward to a friendly visit. A cow which is not full grown, but no longer considered a calf, is called a heifer. Our heifers live in the small shed behind the dairy barn. Some heifers spend the summer in a pasture way up the hill.

Between the dairy barn and the heifer barn walk back and you'll find the manure pit. Don't fall in! This manure is hauled to the other end of the farm where it is laid out in long rows in the sun to compost.

When a heifer is a little over a year old, she is bred by artificial insemination. Cows have a 9 month gestation, and at about 2 years old they give birth and begin their career as one of our beloved dairy cows. Each cow has her own stall in the dairy barn. The plaque above their stall has information about each cow such as her parents' names, how many calves she's had, how much milk she's produced and the fat and protein content of her milk. It also states when her last calf was born (fresh date), and the due date for her next calf if she is expecting.

Now back to the start, past the garden and brook
Turn left at the Pond, and ahead of you look
Ahead is the Sugarhouse. We make sweet syrup, you know
Behind is your treasure. Look high and low!
Time to celebrate, you're finished, you're done!
We hope you learned something, and had lots of fun!

We generally make syrup in March, and celebrate the sugaring season each year with our Sap Gathering Event, held the 3rd Saturday in March. For more information about Sap Gathering call the farm. We'd love to tell you all about it!

Created by the Stonewall Farm education staff and revised by Marci Birkes in 2007.