



Riverbanks Farm

Riverbanks Farm opened on April 9, 1988 after more than two years of planning and construction. The Farm was the first major project of Zoo II, a \$6.5 million capital improvement program that was the first major expansion of the Zoo since its 1974 opening.

Riverbanks Farm serves a dual purpose and, like all of the exhibits and programs at the 170-acre Zoo and Garden, its primary function is education. The Farm was designed to explain the methods as well as the importance of the farm industry to the state of South Carolina. In addition, it allows Zoo visitors, especially children, to compare the behavior and management of domestic and exotic animals. In fact, in donating the major gift that made the Farm a reality, Columbia Farms dedicated their commitment to the project to the children of South Carolina. Columbia Farms' gift also included a permanent exhibit to teach visitors how chicks are hatched and the importance of poultry in our food cycle. Incubators and hatchers provide a continuous cycle of hatching chicks.

The primary structure of the Farm is a 3,500 square-foot wooden barn that is home to the animal collection, including barn owls, Jersey cows and Nubian goats. The daily activities of farm life are in full view at the Farm, including the servicing of stalls and hay loading. Also included inside the barn is an exhibit entitled "Nature on the Farm." Common farm animals such as the cotton rat, black rat snake, box turtle and southern toad are on display and the exhibit includes a real beehive. The barnyard contains the animal contact ring, where guests have the opportunity to pet llamas and feed the goats.

A 1,000 square-foot classroom located beside the barn offers agriculture-related programs each month for guests. The classroom also is available as a unique meeting place for farm-related groups and workshops.

Through the years, the Farm has been home to an array of farm animals and special demonstrations and exhibits. For a number of years, a cow-milking demonstration stressed the importance of the dairy industry to the agricultural industry of South Carolina. Some of the dairy equipment used in milk production can still be seen on display in the barn. More recently, pony rides were added to the list of offerings on the Farm. Children are able to take a ride on a through a wooded trail located directly beside the Farm classroom. The ponies make their home in the barn when not working.

A visit to Riverbanks Farm is an opportunity to learn more about domesticated animals and their role in the world of agriculture. Riverbanks Farm continues to help fulfill the Zoo's mission of fostering care and concern for all living things by teaching visitors about the connections between farm and man as well as between farm and the natural world.