

Waste Management Award

Burren Free Range Pork, Kilfenora

Geopark Sustainable Code of Practice Award Winner



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Who they are: Eva and Stephen Hegarty run a small eco friendly sustainable farm where they rear free range, rare breed pigs, beef cattle and grow vegetables. Their ethos is to keep everything as natural as possible. Dealing with waste has become a passion for the Hegarty's, they are trying to create a place where there is no such thing as waste and where everything is considered a resource. Burren Free range Pork joined the Burren Ecotourism Network in 2012 and undertook the Geopark Code of Practice for sustainable tourism in the same year.

What they did: Reusing, recycling and upcycling have all become part of the daily routine on the farm and taking simple actions like the following have an impact on the level of waste the farm generates:

- Choosing to buy loose items instead of pre-packed with Styrofoam
- Feeding food waste where possible to the animals
- Using garden and polytunnel waste as extra feed for the pigs and as mulching and composting material, which is later reused in the garden to enrich the soil quality.
- Reusing used animal bedding and pig manure as natural fertilizers, compost and mulching
- Hard plastic containers are cleaned out and reused as animal feed troughs, for water harvesting, as plant or vegetable containers and general storage.
- Cardboard (non coloured) and paper feed bags are used in weed control around trees and in the garden and in the hen cabin to collect manure, that is ultimately added to the compost heap to increase nitrogen levels.
- Waste metals are reused and repurposed where possible: An old metal gate became part of a concrete bridge to strengthen the structures. and an old horse truck has been converted to accommodation (Glamping), using recyclable and second hand materials to a large extent allowing the Hegarty's to diversify their business.

Outcome: Reusing and upcycling waste has contributed to fewer bags of waste going to landfill. As a result waste costs have been reduced by €230 per year and operating costs have been reduced thus contributing to the commercial viability of the farm.

Top Tip: Everybody can start thinking of more reusing, upcycling and recycling. It might take a little bit longer, but in the long run it's a win-win situation for all. It is simply a change of mindset.