Outdoor Burning
- Wildfires happen most often during the months of April and May. A primary cause of these fires is debris burning.
- Permits are needed for all outdoor debris burning whenever the ground is not snow covered. Burning permits may be obtained from the Town; ask about informing emergency dispatch. No permit is needed when the sole purpose is for cooking and warming.

Trespass
- You are criminally trespassing on private land unless you get permission from the owner. Land does not have to be posted with signs unless it is adjacent to public land (includes private forest lands open to public hunting/use). Respect private property and ask before you use.

ATV, Snowmobile and Trail Use
- Within Polk County ATV use is allowed on your private property.
- The Cattail, Sterling and Clear Lake-Clayton trails are designated public ATV trails within the County. Please be considerate and respect your neighbors.
- Polk County has a system of public snowmobile and hiking trails. Maps for these trails can be found at: http://www.polkcountytourism.com/maps.html For more information contact the County Parks and Buildings Department at (715) 485-9294.

Burn Barrels
- The DNR strongly discourages the use of burn barrels.
- The only items that may be burned are leaves, plant clippings, paper, cardboard, and clean untreated wood.
- Burning materials such as tires, plastic, and rubber is prohibited because they generate toxic air emissions and hazardous ash residue. For more information see: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/aw/air/hot/barrels.htm

Additional Resources
For more information on Rural Living, contact the Polk County Information Center at (715) 483-1410 or the County UW-Extension Office, see the following University of Wisconsin-Extension Publications, or visit www.uwex.edu/ces:
- Country Acres: A Guide to Buying and Managing Rural Property (G3309)
- Care & Maintenance of Resid. Septic Systems (B3583)
- Outdoor Hazards in Wisconsin: A Guide to Noxious Insects, Plants, and Wildlife (G3564)
- Plants Not Favored by Deer (A3727)
- Landscape Plants That Attract Birds (G1609)
- Prairie Primer (G3736)
- Wildlife Management (G3097)

Recreation
Hunting, Fishing and Trapping
- Hunting, fishing and trapping are rural traditions. There is a season for many species, some of which are open the entire year. Most hunting however is done in the fall. Wisconsin has hunter harassment laws that make it a crime to interfere with legal hunting. Respect those who participate in these activities or join a local sportsman club to learn how to participate yourself.

This information is by no means all inclusive. There may be issues that you may encounter that we have overlooked. Look for the unexpected and surprises when purchasing rural property.

Acknowledgement: Rural Living Guide by Bob Kuzmierski, Polk County UW-Extension. Adapted from Mike Kornmann

University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. UW-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming including Title IX and ADA
Wells and Drinking Water

- Drinking water for rural houses comes from private wells. State regulations only require that the water be tested for bacteria at the time of construction. Thereafter it is the responsibility of landowners to test their water periodically.
- Water testing kits are available at the Polk County Health Department at (715) 485-8500 in Balsam Lake; or through private labs. A fee may apply.
- The most common contaminant in Polk County wells is nitrate, which comes from animal waste, soil fertilizer, or failing septic systems. Contact the Polk County Land and Water Resource Department at (715) 485-8699 or Wisconsin DNR at (715) 822-3590.
- Most farmers have a nutrient management plan for their farm which is based on soil tests and the crops grown in order to grow crops efficiently and minimize run off.

Private Property Restrictions

- There are private arrangements in addition to government regulations that may affect what you may do with your property.
- Easements may require you to allow construction and maintenance of roads, utilities, storm water facilities, etc. across your land.
- Many rural housing developments have homeowner associations with deed restrictions and covenants that restrict outbuildings, outdoor storage, and building design. These restrictions may be recorded with the property deed, or with the plat. Check these issues carefully. Contact the County Register of Deeds at (715) 485-9240.

Government Services

- All unincorporated areas are governed under “town” government. In many other states, including Minnesota, this unit of government is called a “township.” “Town” are not the same as small cities or villages, although they may have the same name.

Septic Systems

- Private onsite wastewater treatment systems (POWTS) are used to treat wastewater from rural houses. Septic systems are the most common type of POWTS. Maintenance and care of these systems are the responsibility of the landowner.
- All POWTS are required to be inspected every three years, and most will need to be pumped at that time.
- Improper maintenance of your septic system could lead to premature failure of the system, expensive repairs, and contamination of your well water.
- For more information see “Care and Maintenance of Septic Systems.” University of Wisconsin—Extension publication B3583. Or contact the Polk County Land Information Department at (715) 485-9170.

Roads and Driveway Access

- Most rural roads are under public ownership. Maintenance of public roads is the responsibility of the Town, County or State. The responsibility of the owners along a private road/joint driveway to maintain and plow snow.
- A driveway permit is required for access to public roads and highways. Standards for driveway locations vary depending on jurisdiction. For town roads contact your Town Board; for county roads, contact the Polk County Highway Department at (715) 485-8700; for state highways contact WisDOT at (800) 991-5285.
- Adequate space for emergency vehicle access is critical to your safety. Every driveway should have 12 feet of horizontal clearance and 13.5 feet of vertical clearance.

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Snow Plowing

- Snow plowing takes longer to complete in a rural area. Your road may not be plowed before you have to leave in the morning. Major roads such as state highways and county roads get first priority.
- If you live on a private road or joint driveway, snow plowing is your responsibility. Talk to your neighbor before it snows.

Garbage and Recycling

- Garbage collection and recycling program details vary from town to town. Contact your Town Clerk.
- Special collections for hazardous waste are held periodically each year. However, appliances, electronics, and tires are collected at the recycling center during business hours.
- For more information contact the County Recycling Specialist at (715) 485-9294.