



Volunteer and Work Experience Handbook

Fairfield Links CIC
Ruskington Fen
Company Number: 14748762

POINT OF CONTACT:

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Welcome to volunteering at Fairfield Community Farm.

We are pleased to welcome you to our fantastic team of volunteers and helpers and hope you will enjoy your time working with us.

Fairfield Community Farm is a working smallholding, just outside of Ruskington, Sleaford, with animals including sheep, goats, pigs, horses and ponies, chickens, ducks and geese. The farm is under continued development by the volunteer team and is far from being perfect so mud, animal waste and uneven ground should be expected.

Our mission is to provide a safe and welcoming community space where people can come and spend time on the farm to help improve their mental and physical health. Regular events take place offering experiences with animals, gardening, socialising and education.

Volunteers can get involved in as much or as little as they like, including animal care, landscaping, maintenance, education and social events. Training will be given as appropriate to each role and equipment is provided.

Fairfield Community Farm, herein referred to as **Fairfield**, is part of Fairfield Links CIC, a not for profit Community Interest Company.

Improving health and well-being through animals and nature.

Fairfield's mission is to:

Promote community involvement and skills development within a sociable and supportive environment. Providing opportunities to spend time outdoors, surrounded by animals and nature to improve health and well-being.

Core Values

- **Care** – We aim to improve the well-being of all participants and animals with understanding and support and make our environments as accessible as possible.
- **Inclusion** – All of our community are welcome to join us in our projects (subject to minimum age restrictions when necessary), regardless of religion, political affiliation, lifestyle, disabilities, or differences.
- **Kindness** – We show kindness to others, including the plants and animals, building environments allowing all to thrive.
- **Sustainability** – We support the planet through reducing, reusing, and recycling wherever possible. Rainwater is collected and renewable power sources utilised as much as possible.
- **Education** – We seek to educate all volunteers and visitors about animal care, our environment and sustainable living as appropriate to the activities taking place.

Volunteering provides value to people and society. All voluntary contributions enrich our lives and those of the local community. Tolerance and trust are fundamental to all voluntary activities and all opinions are equally valid. Through volunteering and collective working, we can provide a powerful force for social improvement.

Recruitment and Screening Policy

In order to recruit volunteers, we will use a variety of methods including social media, internet, word of mouth and advertisements.

Volunteer details will be stored in secure files and only accessed by those that need to know for the benefit of our volunteers, projects and Fairfield. Volunteers will be invited to join the farm manager for a confidential conversation* and requested to complete relevant volunteer paperwork prior to commencement of work with us. Having a criminal record or learning/physical difference does not exclude a person from volunteering but may affect the type of role they can undertake. Where required, EDBS/DBS checks will be carried out in line with Fairfield Safeguarding policy.

If we feel that a particular role may not be suitable for a potential volunteer, feedback will be given and an alternative option offered where possible.

**Not applicable for community volunteers at organised events.*

Volunteer Status

Volunteers are not employees of Fairfield Community Farm. There will be no legally enforceable contract between the volunteer and Fairfield in relation to the role and therefore there will be no payment for any work that the volunteer may undertake during the placement.

The volunteer does not have to accept any role offer and may withdraw at any point, before or after starting in the role. Fairfield are not obligated to offer a volunteering role and reserve the right to turn down applicants. We do, however, appreciate those that offer their services and welcome the value of their contributions.

Volunteer Information

Prior to volunteering at Fairfield, volunteers will be required to complete emergency contact information, inform Fairfield of any relevant medical conditions and sign a volunteer agreement. This information is stored securely onsite and electronically and is only used within Fairfield to ensure the safety of the volunteer.

Volunteer Roles

We have lots of different volunteering and work opportunities for you to get involved in. Please look through the various job roles and think about which would best suit your own needs, timing commitments and circumstances. The farm manager or your volunteer mentor will discuss your role with you prior to starting.

Independent Volunteers

This role is designed for those that, once fully trained, are able and willing to work without support and can commit to at least three hours per week. Working hours can be flexible to support those who work shifts but should be pre-arranged with the farm manager. During training, independent volunteers should attend during supported work experience sessions.

Casual Volunteers

Ideal for those that wish to commit a small amount of time each week, or on an adhoc basis. Casual volunteers can only be accepted during set time periods, when there is a more experienced volunteer present.

Supported Work Experience

For those who would like to gain experience of working on the farm but may need additional support in order to fulfil duties, and workers that are under the age of 18 years.

Farming Participant

Designed to allow those with significant learning, physical and mental health differences to access the opportunity to experience working on a farm. Participants should pre-arrange their visit with the Farm Manager.

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There are many different jobs and duties that are required to keep the farm running smoothly. In order to ensure the well-being of our animals and the best possible experience for our teams, we have three main volunteering roles available.

- Animal Care – Working directly with the animals and contributing to animal welfare.
- Farm Hand – Maintaining and developing the environment around the farm.
- Education and Well-Being – Hosting and educating visitors, both formally and informally.

The descriptions over the following pages (pages 6-8) are included to give you an idea about the opportunities available. Have a chat with any of our friendly team if you want more information about any of them.

Animal Care Volunteer

Qualities desired for this role

Animal care volunteers must be passionate about animal welfare. The role involves physical duties and working in all weather conditions. An animal care volunteer should possess a willingness to learn and be compassionate and reliable. An interest in animal health and ability to work as part of a larger team is essential. Volunteers should be resilient and adaptable as the animals rarely do as we would expect!

What does a typical day look like?

A typical day as an animal care volunteer starts around 9am with animal feeding and welfare checks. Animals may need moving around the farm at the beginning of the day depending on the time of year and individual animal needs. Hay nets and water bowls/troughs get checked and filled where necessary.

After feeding, it is normally time for mucking out. Every enclosure used by animals must be cleaned regularly, in accordance with the Fairfield cleaning schedule, bedding may also need changing or topping up. Animal care volunteers may also be asked to assist with medicating, clipping, grooming and hoof/foot care when needed.

Evening duties include preparing fresh produce for the animals, feeding, filling hay nets, checking water and bedding areas and moving animals to correct overnight locations where needed. All enclosures should be checked to be secure and comfortable for the animals overnight.

Duties may include (but are not limited to):

- Preparing and delivering food to animals.
- Mucking out and cleaning animal enclosures.
- Reporting concerns about animal health and health and safety to Farm Manager.
- Keeping public areas clean, tidy and safe.
- Supporting other volunteers with additional tasks.
- Interaction with members of the public.
- Providing enrichment for the animals.

Farm Hand Volunteers

Qualities desired for this role

Farm Hand volunteers need to be versatile and proactive. The role involves maintaining the environment around the farm to ensure it is safe, tidy and well-kept for our animals, volunteers and visitors. As a farm hand, you will need to be physically able to conduct tasks that you undertake and should only ever work within your skillset. A proactive, problem-solving approach is vital, along with strong communication skills. Volunteers must be willing to work in all weathers and show good adaptability. Due to the nature of this role, and the use of tools, volunteers for this role must be over 18 years of age.

What does a typical day look like?

Farm Hand Volunteers start their day by checking in with the Farm Manager (or senior volunteer when not available) and the jobs board. Once agreeing priorities, the Farm Hand Team will conduct maintenance as requested (within their skill set). This may include building, painting or mending fences, clearing areas, landscaping, waste removal, tending hedges and ditches or any number of other maintenance needs.

Duties may include (but are not limited to):

- Working with timber
- Building, maintaining and improving animal enclosures, gates and housing
- Landscaping, including hedge cutting
- Painting and weatherproofing
- Clearing areas
- General cleaning around farm
- Waste removal (including supervising bonfires where necessary)
- Creating animal enrichment structures
- Maintaining and storing tools
- Digging and clearing ditches
- Flood protection measures

Education and Well-being

Qualities desired for this role – Education and Well-being (EWB) volunteers must be compassionate and approachable. Experience within the well-being or education sectors is desirable, although not essential as training and guidance will be provided for those that wish to develop in this role.

Well-being volunteers need to be able to engage with the general public using empathy and care. Listening skills, a perceptive nature and positive attitude are imperative for the role.

Education volunteers need to be able to relate and engage children and young people in a variety of activities. They must be knowledgeable and confident in the activities they are delivering.

All EWB volunteers should be very mindful of safeguarding, health and safety and learning differences. Inclusivity and communication must be the cornerstone of all interactions with visitors. EWB volunteers must hold (or be willing to gain) EDBS. Fairfield can help apply for this if required.

What does a typical day look like?

Every day is different for education and well-being volunteers, depending on what activities are scheduled. During hosting a coffee morning for example, it is the job of the EWB volunteer to ensure the area is clear, accessible and suitable for visitors, and to boil water and get refreshments ready prior to the start of the event. During the event, the EWB volunteers circulate amongst visitors, ensuring they are comfortable and have required refreshments. Chatting to public and making everyone feel included. After a well-being event, the EWB volunteers wash up and clear away any equipment used. Alternatively, leading a school visit could involve running a craft or nature activity such as pond dipping, or it might be a farming experience where children need to be supervised and instructed on how to care for animals. Maintaining behaviour standards is the responsibility of the group adults, but EWB volunteers need to be confident enough to set expectations and reminders, demonstrate activities and talk about the animals.

Duties may include (but are not limited to):

- Hosting Coffee Mornings / community events
- Supporting people experiencing poor mental health
- Showing visitors around
- Delivering events for children
- Leading activities and educational sessions
- Delivering talks or instruction about animals/nature

Induction and Training

On the first day of volunteering, you will have a tour of the farm and receive an induction. Most of what you learn will be on-the-job training, done as part of your role with us. We will guide you through each task and explain how to use tools safely and efficiently. Any time you are required to complete a new or unfamiliar task you will be shown how to do so correctly. You should always ask if you are unsure of anything or want to be shown something again. No volunteer will be expected to complete tasks they are not comfortable with.

Where external training and development relevant to your role is available the Farm Manager will speak directly with you. Some roles will include mandatory training; these will be discussed on an individual basis.

Farm health and safety policies apply to all volunteers. Volunteers will also receive information about hazards and risks relevant to their role and are expected to familiarise themselves with any relevant Risk Assessments and policies (volunteers will be directed to where they can find them by the Farm Manager). Volunteers are expected to comply with all relevant policies at all times while volunteering.

Expectations

What volunteers can expect from Fairfield Community Farm.

- Respect and understanding
- Positive working relationships
- Flexible approach to working and commitments
- Support and instruction
- Appropriate training relevant to the volunteer role being undertaken
- Lockers for storage of personal belongings
- Realistic expectations and targets
- Safe working conditions, including insurance cover
- First aid trained staff members
- Access to Risk Assessments and policies affecting the volunteer role
- Clear and transparent communication at all levels
- The opportunity to provide suggestions and feedback

Fairfield will never expect any volunteer to conduct lone working without prior agreement, or to undertake tasks that they feel uncomfortable with.

What Fairfield Community Farm expects from volunteers.

- Carry out your role to the best of your ability
- Act in accordance with Fairfield core values, policies and procedures
- Only complete tasks that you are trained to complete and within your own ability
- Treat all others with respect
- Inform Project Lead if you are unable to attend a session previously committed to
- Let the Farm Manager or your Volunteer Mentor know if you no longer wish to volunteer
- Maintain confidentiality of others
- Report any concerns to the relevant Project Lead at the earliest opportunity

Timings

In order to ensure we have the help when necessary, and to manage the amount of people on the farm at one time we use an informal booking system for volunteers.

Independent Volunteers/ Volunteer Mentors – Independent volunteers and Volunteer Mentors should arrange volunteering hours directly with the Farm Manager.

Casual Volunteers and Trainees – Casual volunteers should check when group volunteering sessions are open and let the farm manager know if they wish to attend these sessions.

Supported Work Experience and Farm Participants – Accessible sessions will be arranged between you and the Farm Manager.

Equipment

All necessary equipment will be provided during volunteer sessions. If you require any additional adaptations, please speak with the Farm Manager. If you would like to use personal equipment during your volunteer role, this must be cleared with the Farm Manager/Project Lead prior to use. If any equipment becomes broken or defective while in use, it is your responsibility to cease using it and report this to the relevant person.

Dress Code

Volunteers should dress appropriately for practical working including suitable footwear. Open toed shoes and skirts are not suitable for farm work. You will need a good pair of wellies or working boots and waterproofs in case of inclement weather. Fairfield can provide gloves, safety glasses and facemasks where required, but you are encouraged to bring your own if you have them. You will get dirty so please wear old clothes/clothes you don't mind getting messy.

Please remember that you will be working in an outdoor environment and so need to be prepared for the unpredictability of British weather. This could mean considering bringing hats/scarf/gloves, towel, spare socks and sun cream, depending on the time of year.

Refreshments

Regular breaks are taken throughout the day. Fairfield has an all-weather marquee and a small inside area that can be used for volunteer rest breaks, there is also a portable toilet. Tea, coffee, water, and juice are provided while you are volunteering at Fairfield, and often biscuits and sweet treats are on offer. All volunteers should, however, bring their own lunch (where necessary) and be mindful of their own dietary needs. A drinks flask/water bottle is also recommended for use while working.

Smoking

Smoking is discouraged throughout the farm, especially around the animals. All volunteers and visitors are asked to use the area in front of the main gate if smoking and dispose of any waste mindfully, without dropping on the floor. This rule applies for all cigarette products, including vapes, e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products.

Children and Pets

Volunteers should not bring children or pets to Fairfield while volunteering except by prior arrangement with the Farm Manager. Any children brought onsite must be supervised at all times by an appropriate adult. This cannot be the volunteer while they are carrying out their volunteering role.

Support

Volunteers are encouraged to speak to any of the team should they have any questions or concerns during their volunteering role. Suggestions are also actively encouraged.

One to One review meetings can be arranged on request. These are not scheduled in as standard because we believe in open and honest communication at all times, so will regularly check in informally during your time here.

Communications

The Farm Manager can be contacted at any time via phone, text, WhatsApp, or email. Please bear in mind that it may not be possible to respond immediately due to signal or farm commitments.

Kathy Owen – 07775 741383 – fairfieldcf@outlook.com

We also have a volunteer WhatsApp group which the team use for chatting and sharing information/pictures. Please ask to be added.

Details of events and important dates can be found on the Fairfield Community Farm Facebook page and website.

Volunteer and Staff Meetings

As a community farm, we feel it is important to keep all our team involved in what is happening. To help us do this, team meetings may be called by the Farm Manager. You will be notified in advance of dates and timings for meetings relevant to your role. Attendance of team meetings is not compulsory but is strongly encouraged to give all team members chance to learn and have input into Fairfield's scheme of work.

Feedback

Volunteers are encouraged to provide ideas, suggestions, and feedback throughout their time with us. Fairfield welcomes your opinions so that we can ensure all volunteers get the best out of their experience.

Free Produce

When available, volunteers may be offered surplus eggs and plants as a thank you for your hard work. Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure they are safe to eat prior to consumption.

Expenses

Fairfield is currently unable to reimburse personal expenses incurred by individuals in relation to their volunteering role. Any purchases made in contribution to the project will only be reimbursed where previously approved and on production of a valid receipt.

Transport

Regrettably, Fairfield are unable to support with transport. Volunteers are expected to make their own way to the relevant sites. We do, however, encourage lift sharing wherever possible.

Insurance

All volunteers are covered by Fairfield while carrying out their role both on site and on external visits.

Health and Safety

We will provide you with a safe environment, suitable equipment, and training to carry out your role at Fairfield. All team members should ensure they use tools and PPE as advised, follow all training and adhere to all health and safety procedures at all times.

If anyone has concerns about potential hazards or problems, they should report them immediately to a senior member of staff.

Please be aware that farm work can be physical and strenuous and you may be doing activities that your body is not used to. Always work at a pace that suits you, take regular breaks, and drink plenty of water. If you are unsure how to do a task, or it feels too difficult or strenuous for you, let someone know and we can reallocate duties.

You will be given additional Health and Safety information and Risk Assessments at your induction; please make sure you read these thoroughly.

Our Health and Safety declaration and insurance are displayed in the Caravans, Feed Room and the Farm Club Shed. Please familiarise yourself with these so that you can volunteer safely and with confidence.

Volunteers must read the Volunteer H&S Guide and Field Risk Assessment prior to undertaking any tasks.

Policy Documentation

You will receive a copy of this volunteer handbook and Fairfield policy documents during your induction, it is the volunteer's responsibility to familiarise themselves with these policies. All policy documents are stored in the Office and can be made available to volunteers at any time. The website is also under development to allow volunteers access via the Volunteer Portal.

Complaints

We want all our volunteers and participants to be happy in their roles, in the unlikely event that you have a problem or complaint you should speak with your volunteer mentor in the first instance. If any volunteer feels they have been treated unfairly, has a serious concern or feels unable to speak to their mentor for any reason, they should speak to the Farm Manager either directly or by email at fairfieldcf@outlook.com

If you still feel that your complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily, please refer to the volunteer complaints procedure.