

# LEWIS CREEK FARM

# Employee Handbook

Updated for 2021

## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR NEW EMPLOYEES.

**THE WORK** The work at Lewis Creek Farm is physically demanding. There's heavy lifting, there's a lot of bending over and weather can range from 35degrees and raining to 90 and humid. Throughout all this, I am expecting you to produce at a rapid pace. You need to be able to numb yourself to boring repetitive task without losing speed and yet be ready to think about and plan the next task. It takes an athlete's constitution, the serenity of a Buddhist monk and the mental acuity of a chess player. Everyone knows: "Farming is hard work." The only reason any given farm survives is because they work hard and work smart. I'm expecting a lot.

**ARRIVE ON TIME** If you're scheduled to start work at 8 am, you should be ready to start working at 8:00 sharp. In order to achieve this it is usually necessary to actually arrive at the farm by 7:55. If you have coffee to finish, rain gear to put on, letters to mail, someone to talk to, or other extraneous details to attend to, you should allow even more time. Just because you parked your car at 8:00am, doesn't mean you started work at 8:00am. Please record your start time accurately on the time sheet.

**RUNNING LATE** If it looks like you're going to be late, call or email Hank before 8:00 AM. I use the slogan: "No car; No call: No Job." by which I mean: If you're going to be late for any reason, like the car won't start, or even if the alarm didn't go off, let me know you're running late. If you don't, I'm going to start to feel like you're unreliable and I might start feeling like I should let you go.

**PARKING** Please park your car in the employee parking area to the south of the red barn. Pull it in as far as you can to avoid having a tractor clip the back of your car.

**I-9 & W-4 Forms** You will be asked to fill out these forms out before you start work on your first day, so try to have the necessary documents with you. These forms must be completed before you will receive any pay checks.

**For the I-9** you will need either:

A US Passport - current or expired.

Or a combination of the following:

Driver's license plus social security card or Birth Certificate

Other documents will suffice, but these are the most commonly available.

**The W-4** asks what your filing status is (single, married or head of household) and whether you have another job as well as whether your spouse has another job and how many dependents you have. All this is so that we can withhold the correct amount of federal and state taxes from you pay check.

**LUNCH & BREAKS** We take a one hour unpaid lunch break, plus one paid 15 minute break for each full 4 hours you work. The lunch break is somewhat flexible. I take an hour, and you can take an hour as well if you like. However at the other extreme, there are some people who take only breaks. If you are going to take a short lunch (less than 1 hour) You need to know exactly what job you are going back to and what needs to be done. Don't come looking for me during my lunch break wondering what you should do next. This takes some planning on your part and may not be appropriate your first week or two.

**BREAKS** You get one paid 15 minute break for every 4 hours that you work at a stretch. If you work less than 4 hours at a stretch, you don't get a break.

If you're entitled to a break, it is your responsibility to take it, to decide just when to take it and to coordinate it with the work to be done. Break is designed as a pause in the work. A chance to sit down, stretch your back, have a snack, get a drink, use the bathroom. You will observe that many employees do not take a regular break. This is their style

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and prerogative. Breaks are not cumulative, or creditable. Take each break as it comes. Do not arrive late or leave early or take a long lunch because you're not planning to take a break.

### **ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR NEW EMPLOYEES.**

**BOOTS** You need to supply your own rubber boots. They are cheap and essential. You must have a pair by the end of your first week of work. The most common kind is what are referred to as "Barn Boots". They are knee high and made of rubber or vinyl. They range in price from \$9.99 to \$24.99 and the cheap ones last as well as the expensive ones. (about 1 year) You can get them at Agway in Middlebury or Williston or the hardware store in Hinesburg.

**CELL PHONE USE** You should not be making or receiving phone calls or text messages during work. You can return messages during lunch or on your break. I do occasionally contact experienced employees in positions of responsibility by cell phone with important information. However, the general rule is: If you're talking on your phone during work time, you better be talking to Hank.

**TIME CARD** Record your time each day on the time sheet in the Coop. Record both your start and finish times to the nearest 5 minute increment. I will assume you have taken a 1 hour lunch break unless you indicate otherwise.

**OVERTIME** We try to make the work day end at 5 PM (6pm for the farmstand) but some days we run over a bit, usually 15 minutes to 1/2 an hour and rarely more than 1 hour. This daily time over run should be viewed as part of finishing the job. During some parts of the season, we can accommodate qualified individuals who wish to regularly put in additional time, especially those who can self supervise. All overtime will be paid at the normal hourly rate.

**PAY PERIOD** Pay checks are distributed on Friday for the week ending the previous Wednesday.

**PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS** We will withhold from your pay check any amounts required by law. For U.S. citizens that will be: Federal and State income tax and Social Security tax.

**CULTURAL DIFFERENCES** We do hire foreign workers, particularly Jamaicans, so you will often be working with people who have grown up in different cultures. This can occasionally lead to misunderstandings and unintentionally hurt feelings. While we all speak English, our cultures attach different meanings, significance and value to the same words. If you find yourself shocked, offended or merely bewildered, by something someone else says, please consider the possibility in such a situation, that you are experiencing a difference in cultures. Please bring the situation to Hank's attention so we can clarify or resolve the issue.

**EPA WORKER TRAINING** Federal Law requires that any person who works in a field that has had any pesticide (even pesticides approved for use on organic farms) applied to it within the last 30 days, must have some training about pesticide safety. In general our use of pesticides is infrequent and most of the pesticides we use are approved for use on organic farms. You will receive this training from Hank.

### **FOOD SAFETY**

We are producing food. Accordingly, we need to keep things clean. Given that we are also working with dirt, keeping things clean poses a particular challenge. A motto that I like to keep in mind, which embodies the degree of cleanliness that we are striving for is "Clean as a Kitchen" You will receive formal Food Safety Training from Hank.

**READ THE FULL EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK** The full Employee [Handbook is available on line \(here\)](#) and you are responsible for reading it in its entirety during your first week of employment. If it is not possible for you to access the employee handbook on line, there is a paper copy in the Coop.

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*The preceding 2 pages of this handbook were headed “Essential Information For New Employees” and you were asked to read them before you started work your first day. As your time here goes on, you will find that the addition information that follows is essential as well.*

*This is a long list of hints, customs, guidelines, rules and obligations that I’d tell you all personally if I could. It’s all stuff you’ll need to know sooner or later. Some of it is a little stiff, like the Mission Statement and the Equal Opportunity Statement, but most of it is just helpful hints about how we do things around here. I never remember to tell everyone everything, so, I’ve written it all down.*

*Read it through in the first week, so that in a month you don’t find yourself saying “Oh, I didn’t know that.”*

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission for Lewis Creek Farm is to run a farm that:

- Is financially successful
- Supplies a wide diversity of quality and healthful food to local and regional markets.
- Maintains and improves the environmental quality of the farm.
- Provides an enjoyable work place for those who are willing and able to work hard.
- Maintains a positive relationship with the local community.

Achieving this is an ongoing task which requires constant vigilance and frequent assessment of our performance.

### **EQUAL OPORTUNITY**

We hire, promote, and make work assignments on the basis of employee qualifications without regard to race, religion, color, sex, age, nation of origin, or a disability unrelated to the job in question as per requirements of the relevant state and federal laws. Discriminatory behavior by anyone on this farm will not be tolerated.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY**

We value all our employees and want them to feel comfortable coming to work every day. Sexual harassment can make the farm a place that you or your fellow workers feel uncomfortable and want to avoid rather than participate enthusiastically. Sexual harassment is not only unfriendly, and unproductive, it is illegal. We will not tolerate sexual harassment.

Examples of sexual harassment:

- Verbal – Sexual innuendoes, suggestive comments, jokes of a sexual nature, Sexual propositions or sexual threats.
- Non-Verbal – Sexual suggestive objects or pictures, graphic commentaries, Suggestive or insulting sounds, leering, whistling or obscene gestures.
- Physical – Unwanted physical contact, including touching, pinching, brushing the Body, coerced sexual intercourse or assault.

If you feel that you have been the victim of sexual harassment at Lewis Creek Farm, please tell Hank. He will deal with the situation promptly.

### **H2A PROGRAM**

In order to get enough help during the peak points in the year, we participate in a Federal program known as H-2A. This enables us to hire foreign workers when US labor sources cannot fill our needs. It is through the H-2A Program that we hire a few Jamaicans each year. The H-2A program is heavily regulated to ensure that US workers are not displaced by foreign workers and to ensure as well that the foreign workers are treated well. The Jamaicans are hard workers and very nice people. They’re a pleasure to have around.

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## **OBSERVANCE OF HOLIDAYS**

During the growing season, we work without regard for any holidays. This means that we work on Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Columbus Day and Veterans Day.

## **LUNCH ON PAYDAY**

On payday it has become customary to skip morning break, and add it to lunch time in order to make it a little easier to get to Bristol and back for depositing pay checks and lunch. This is the only exception we take to the rule about breaks not being creditable or accruable.

## **BRING A WATCH**

If you are returning for a second year, or if you are a crew leader, you must have a watch with you on the job, because you will have the responsibility for scheduling of multiple tasks.

Anyone with expectations of getting done work in a timely fashion at the end of the day needs a watch. Hank is not going to track you down at 5:00 to tell you it's time to go home.

**SPECIAL SCHEDULES** We can accommodate some occasional deviation from the standard schedule to allow for special situations or appointments. Please plan to clear these special arrangements with Hank well in advance.

If you are arriving late (not at 8:00am or 1:00pm), your time is counted from when you hook up with the crew not when you arrive at the Coop.

Likewise if you have to leave early for some reason (before 12:00 noon or 5:00pm) your time is counted from when you leave the crew. If you need to leave early it is your responsibility to keep track of the time. Bring a watch.

## **FARMERS' MARKET**

Part of your job may be to help at the Farmers' Market in Burlington on Saturday. If this is the case you will show up for work in Burlington at about 8:00 am. The market is often very busy so, come rested and ready to work hard. Please wear clean, un-torn and modest clothes. You may want a hat with a brim to shade your eyes if it looks like it will be sunny, as we do not permit sunglasses. Sunglasses prevent a customer from seeing your eyes and puts a barrier between you and the other person. The Market ends at 2:00pm and you can expect to be done by about 2:45 PM.

## **SICK DAYS**

If you need to be out sick, please call us as soon as you know, even if it's just to leave a message.

While you work at Lewis Creek Farm, you are entitled to a modest amount of paid sick time each year. The number of hours you are entitled to depends on how much time you have worked, so we refer to it as earned sick time. For a full description of all the ins and outs of Earned Sick Time, see the document titled Earned Sick Time Policy.

In cases where an employee is out sick regularly or for an extended period, it may become necessary to replace that person with another employee in order to get the necessary work done.

## **HOUSING**

We have housing in order to make it possible for us to get Jamaican help if we need it. U.S. citizens should expect to find their own housing locally.

## **FREE PRODUCE**

There is a lot of second quality produce available for free, for your personal consumption. It is easiest to round up second quality produce in the barn where we grade the produce. There are often crops that are in excess above demand and you are welcome to take these, after clearing it with Hank. These you should harvest on your own time. Personal consumption is defined as: your own consumption and others in your household.

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### **EMPLOYEE DISCOUNT**

There's always lots of free second quality produce available, but sometimes a new crop comes in like Strawberries or Sweet Corn and you really don't want to wait 2 weeks for surplus supply or seconds to accumulate. You can at any time purchase top quality produce at the farmstand for 1/2 price.

### **EMPLOYEE LOUNGE “The Coop”**

Keep the Coop clean by picking up after yourself.

There is a microwave oven for heating food, however do not plan on preparing food, storing food or storing eating utensils (pots dishes spoons etc) here.

Separate your trash for recycling.

Take everything home on Friday. All personal belongings will be thrown in the trash over the weekend. It may seem a bit draconian, but it sure works to make sure people clean up after themselves.

### **RAIN GEAR**

We work out doors in all kinds of weather, including rain and occasionally snow. A full set of rain gear (pants, coat and hat or hood) is essential. In the summer it is often too hot for full rain gear and a coat is sufficient. However as the weather cools off in the fall, pants become necessary and you will find you wear the rain pants frequently.

There are always lots of rain coats around and these used coats will suffice for the spring and summer months. In the fall we will supply rain pants as well. You may choose to use your own suit. The rain gear we supply is exclusively for your use here at the farm and should stay at the farm so as to be sure that they are here when you need them. Put your name and the year on both parts in large letters (e.g. Hank 2021).

Take care of your suit. Round up your suit at the end of the day and hang it up so that it will be dry and so that you will be able to find it the next time you need it. Holes and tears can be patched with duct tape.

### **KNIVES**

You will be assigned a harvesting knife. It has a Roman Numeral identification number on it. This knife is your responsibility. This is the tool of your trade. Take care of it. Don't lose it. Learn how to sharpen it. Keep it sharp. Keep track of it. You may need it at any time and at a moment's notice.

If you lose it we will supply you with another one, but you will have to pay for it.

**Find out when you had your last tetanus shot.** So you don't have to worry if you cut yourself.

### **VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT**

Most employees use farm vehicles or equipment at least occasionally. You do not need a valid driver's license to drive vehicles on the farm but must have one to operate farm vehicles on public roads. Drive slowly when traveling on farm roads, especially when you have passengers.

When you start driving tractors you will receive training on and explanation of each tractor that you operate from Hank or another experienced tractor driver. You will start driving the tractors with fairly simple jobs like moving the wagon up in the field, and move on to more complicated tasks as the season progresses.

### **SAFETY**

Safety is very important to us and our goal is to do everything in our power to provide safe work environment for our employees. There are first aid supplies in the Farmstand Office. In addition we try to keep a small plastic container of Band-Aids in the tool box of each tractor. If you use up the last Band-Aids in a tractor, let the Farmstand Manager know. They have a supply of Band-aids. If you are involved in an accident that results in injury to you or another worker, or damage to machinery, notify Hank immediately. If you have any suggestions for how we can make our farm a safer place to work, please discuss your ideas with Hank.

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### WORKERS' COMPENSATION

If you are injured at work, medical expenses related to that injury are covered by the Workers' Compensation insurance policy that we are required by law to carry. You will need to fill out an injury report form within 48 hours of being injured in order for the injury to be covered. So, if you have any reason to suspect that you may require medical attention, tell Hank and he will help you fill out an accident report form.

### SMOKING

For safety and health reasons, smoking is not allowed in any of the farm buildings. You may smoke in or near your parked car, or within 50 feet of the coop. You are not permitted to smoke in the fields. Tobacco smoke and residues can carry a plant disease called Tobacco Mosaic. **If you do smoke, you should wash your hands before handling any plant materials.**

### FOOD SAFETY

Keep in mind that many vegetables are eaten raw. If you are handling the chickens or eggs, you should wash your hands before returning to work with vegetables. For the same reason, you should wash your hands after using the bathroom, just as an employee in a restaurant would.

### WORK ETHIC

We value employees who: arrive on time ready to work, can work quickly without compromising quality, who think for themselves about what work needs to be done, who show respect for their fellow workers, employers, equipment and our customers, and who have a good sense of humor.

### BREAKS, Technicalities of what you are entitled to

You get one paid 15 minute break for every 4 hours that you work at a stretch. If you work less than 4 hours at a stretch, you don't get a break. This plays out as follows: Say you are working from 8am to 4:30pm with an hour off for lunch. You get a break in the morning, (8 to 12 is 4 hours), but no break in the afternoon (1 to 4:30 is only 3.5hrs).

### CUSTOMERS

Remember, your job and my job depend on satisfying our customers. Everyone appreciates fast, friendly, reliable service with products that are a good value and high quality.

If you are dealing directly with customers and someone express dissatisfaction with a product that they have purchased from us, immediately apologize and offer them a full refund or replacement. **Do not make excuses.** After you have apologized and offered them a refund, see what you can find out about their problem so we can avoid it in the future. Report any customer dissatisfaction to Hank as soon as possible.

### PRODUCT QUALITY

If you are filling orders in the field or barn remember:

**The produce is cheap. Your time is expensive. Our reputation is priceless.**

What we mean by this is that it's remarkably inexpensive to grow the vegetables, and what is really very expensive is the job of washing and grading it. So when you are grading vegetables don't labor over each leaf of spinach saying to yourself "Gosh, you think this one's OK?" If there's any question, toss it, because there's 2 ways to lose money in a hurry: one is to spend more time fussing over a product than it's worth, and the other is to alienate a customer with bad product. "When in doubt, throw it out."

As a general rule: Fill the boxes very full and discard any questionable product without giving it a second thought.

### "ARE YOU ORGANIC?"

If your job involves working with customers, you will probably be asked: "Are you organic?" or "Is this organic?"

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People rarely want a long winded explanation of biological and ethical issues affecting food production. They're probably looking for a concise yes or no answer and probably would rather hear a yes. We prefer to give a concise, honest and accurate answer. Therefore you will feel best by answering as follows: **"We use a lot of organic methods, but we are not strictly organic."** Many people are happy at this point, but if they pursue the matter you can refer to the [Ecologically Grown page on our website](#) to answer their specific questions.

### **CLOTHING**

Working as we do with our hands in the dirt, we get dirty quickly. Consequently, unless you are dealing with customers, you should wear clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. Wear clothes appropriate to the weather. In hot weather many people wear a hat and use sunscreen. As we get into the late fall, though the weather is cool, we still often need to work without gloves. In these situations, the best policy is to dress for mid-winter, so your torso is hot enough to keep your hands warm.

If you are working at the Farmstand, the Farmers' Market or on the Delivery Route, keep in mind that you are our face to our customers and that they are buying food. So, wear clean, un-torn and modest clothes, and do not wear sunglasses. Sunglasses prevent a person from seeing your eyes and puts a barrier between you and the other person. Sunglasses are fine while you are driving.

### **EMPLOYMENT AT WILL**

Your employment with Lewis Creek Farm is entered into voluntarily and you are free to resign at any time. Similarly, because an "at-will" relationship exists, your employment can be terminated at any time and for any reason.

### **COMMITMENT THROUGH THE END OF THE SEASON**

After we have gone through all the effort and expense of growing our crops it's important to get them all harvested. For this reason we ask employees to make a commitment through the end of the season. The end of the season is considered to be the Friday before Thanksgiving.

The majority of our employees can expect to be laid off the Friday before Thanksgiving.

We will need 1 or 2 employees after this point and through most of the winter. We will discuss who might be interested and eligible as that time approaches.

### **GIVING NOTICE**

Though you may leave your job "at-will", we ask that you give us two weeks' notice before leaving us, especially if you have committed through the end of the season.

### **DISCIPLINE**

To operate a safe and successful business we must observe and follow all company rules and regulations. If your behavior interferes with the efficient operation of the farm disciplinary action may result. The following is a partial list of actions that are grounds for disciplinary action:

- Reporting to work or being at work under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Buying, selling, growing, transporting or possession of illegal drugs on the farm's property or in the farm vehicles.
- Theft or pilferage
- Dishonesty or an attempt to defraud the business.
- Falsifying time sheets for yourself or another person.
- Recklessness or gross negligence leading to a serious or potential accident.
- Sleeping on the job.
- Unauthorized possession of firearms or explosives on the farms property or in the farm's vehicles.
- Willingly, knowingly, or purposefully damaging farm equipment.

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- Insubordination or disregard for your managers and/or assignments.
- Discourteous or inconsiderate treatment of customers, fellow employees, and /or employers.
- Fighting or provoking a fight on the farm.
- Excessive or habitual tardiness or absence from work.

The above list is not inclusive; unacceptable conduct not listed above may lead to disciplinary action. Disciplinary action may include oral warning, written warning, suspension or dismissal.