

# LEWIS CREEK FARM

# Employee Handbook

Updated for 2023

## 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.

**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 \$20.00 to \$30.00 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 SHEET** 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.