



Internship Program Overview

About Mesta Meadows

Mesta Meadows is a livestock ranch located in Bollinger County Missouri, in the eastern edge of the Ozark Highlands. The ranch is owned by Ed and Terri. Their goal is to create a financially and ecologically sustainable ranch that provides the highest quality food and fiber products directly to customers. By selling directly to customers, the Ranch captures the maximum amount of value add while ensuring the highest standards in quality. While the farm is not organically certified, it does follow organic principles and holistic farming practices including pasture raised livestock which are free of hormone and antibiotics. We only use antibiotics in treating sick animals and only when absolutely required. We utilize a grass-based system with minimal non-grass inputs and rotational grazing.

Mesta Meadows is unique in the experience it provides interns due to the range and diversity of operations including:

- Multi-species livestock management including cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry.
- Direct to consumer marketing using multiple channels including ecommerce, on-farm retail store, restaurants, and direct to consumer delivery.
- Traditional commercial sales channels including registered livestock auctions, commercial livestock auctions, and direct treaty sales.
- Working with heritage cattle breeds (Scottish Highland Cattle) and traditional commercial breeds (Angus).
- Dairy sheep operation, as well as fine wool sheep operation.
- Agritourism operation hosting over 1,000 guests per year for camping, tours, and festivals.
- Use of commercial processing (beef, pork, and lamb) facilities as well as on-farm processing (poultry).

The diversity of experience provided by these operations is unparalleled. As an intern, you will be an integral part of the farm operations and have the opportunity to gain a wide range of experience. Our goal is to immerse you in farming and equip you to operate your own farm.

Programs

At Mesta Meadows we offer two internship programs: a three-month program and a one-year program. The goal of the programs are to benefit both the intern through education and experience and to meet our farm needs for labor to support our growth. Interns receive free room and board as well as a monthly stipend. Each program begins with a two week trial period to ensure there is a good fit the intern and our farm, family, and community.

The three-month programs are focused on specific farm activities during that three month season. For example, the January through March program focuses on lambing. The April through June program focuses on wool processing. July through August focuses on calving. September through

December focuses on breeding. Dairy production and management happens throughout the year except in January through February. All the programs include animal husbandry, basic stockmanship, farm management, and farm infrastructure training. Dairy production occurs for nine months of the year (typically February to November).

The year long program is intended to provide intensive training in a grass based, livestock management system with high value add, direct marketing. Our goal is to equip year long interns with the basic skills and knowledge they need to successfully operate a farm. It is impossible to become an expert in farm operations and management in one year. However, you can become proficient, and more importantly, learn what areas of farm or of greatest interest to you.

Questions and Answers:

- **Who would be the perfect fit for this internship program?**

An individual (or couple) who have a strong desire to enter into ranching, but who have not had the opportunity to gain significant hands on experience in an actual farm or ranch operation.

- **Will everyone who goes through this program go on to become a farmer or rancher?**

We hope that most participants in the program do go on to start their own farm or ranch operation. However, for some people, the best part of this experience is learning that farming is NOT what they want to do. It's much better to learn this before you have made a significant investment in equipment, land, and livestock!

- **What is your training philosophy?**

Our approach is to provide you with the basic principles and understanding for a given activity or task, work with you side by side for a period to guide you in the activity or task, and then to 'turn you loose' so you can learn through doing. You will make some mistakes, that is okay – and it is part of the learning process. As long as you learn from the mistakes – it is not a problem.

- **How will you help us get started in farming or ranching?**

In addition to the training and knowledge you will gain, we provide successful graduates of our year long program with a small starter flock (3 ewes and 1 ram lamb) of fine wool sheep. This is a great start to your own flock (our operation started with only 1 ram and 10 ewes!).

Internship Program Curriculum

In addition to hands-on experience in our sheep operation, we expect our apprentices to read extensively about grass-based livestock production, sustainable agriculture and direct marketing. We are active participants in our local agricultural community, and we encourage our apprentices to participate along with us. We also design season-specific projects for each apprentice to help them gain confidence and experience in self-directed activities.

First Quarter (January – March) – LAMBING Hands-on experience includes ewe management, electric fencing, pasture lambing systems, temporary shelter construction, lamb processing and marketing, and business management.

Second Quarter (April – June) – SHEARING/ WEANING Experience includes lamb management, shearing preparation, skirting fleeces, wool marketing, weaning and lamb management, lamb processing and marketing, and business management. Late lambing and spring breeding also occur during this quarter.

Third Quarter (July – September) – PASTURE MANAGEMENT, WOOL MARKETING AND TARGETED GRAZING Experience includes hands-on pasture irrigation management, soils management and conservation, contract and targeted grazing, grass finishing of lambs, lamb processing and marketing, and business management.

Quarter (October – December) – BREEDING MANAGEMENT AND TARGETED GRAZING Experience includes breeding preparation and management, ram selection and management, fall lambing, targeted grazing, lamb processing and marketing, and business management.

Terms of Apprenticeship: During this apprenticeship we will provide you with semi-formal instruction, a one-of-a-kind reading list including materials from our own extensive library, and hands on experience in all aspects of sheep husbandry and marketing. You will compensate us with your labor on the farm.

Housing: We provide housing. Since our operation exists on both owned and leased land, you must have a vehicle and a valid driver's license.

Expectations and Schedule: Hours of work in exchange for teaching will be arranged to suit both of our schedules, and will vary based on the season. For this to be a positive experience, you should:

- Have a strong desire to learn the business of grass-based sheep production and marketing. Marketing????
- Enjoy working with animals; and
- Be very strong, healthy, physically fit, and love working outdoors.

For our part, we will do our best to make your Mesta Meadows experience:

- Fun;
- Challenging;
- Rewarding; and
- Highly educational

You will leave our Apprenticeship Program with the skills and knowledge necessary to start your own grass- based livestock business or to expand your existing enterprise.

Required Foundation Readings:

- Returning to Giving a Damn: The White Oaks Farm Story
- Allan Savory: Holistic Farming

Each intern is expected to complete one farm project and one farm – community project during their internship. Students will be expected to decide on a farm project within the first three weeks of their internship. Examples of potential projects include:

- Producing a small book of lamb recipes
- Developing and hosting a farm to table dinner
- Creating a lamb marketing program

Mesta Meadows Shepard Apprenticeship Program Curriculum

1. Animal Husbandary

- a. Preventive care – vaccinations
- b. Medical care – common disease / conditions and treatments
- c. Internal and external parasites
- d. Nutrition and Body Condition Scoring
- e. Foot care
- f. Giving injections safely
- g. Genetics
- h. Lambing
- i. Livestock water

Assignment: Demonstrate ability to safely give injections

Demonstrate the ability to trim feet

2. Pasture management and Nutrition Supplement

- a. Basic soils information
- b. Plant growth
- c. Nutrition, energy and water cycles
- d. Fencing
- e. Grass finishing
- f. Forage quantity and quality throughout the year

Reading:

- Principles of controlled Grazing (Roger Ingram)
- Pasture Ecology (Roger Ingram)
- More Sheep, More Grass, More Money (Peter Schroedter)

- All Flesh is Grass (Gene Logsdon)

Assignment:

- Manage intern flock

3. Stockmanship and Grazing Behavior

- Low-stress handling techniques
- Handling facilities
- Role of animal behavior in a grazing system
- Livestock guard dogs, handling and training

Reading:

- Belief and the Will to Do it (Roger Ingram and Bud Williams)
- (Steve Cote)

Assignment:

- Move sheep to new paddock without use of herding dogs
- Move sheep through corrals.

4. Dairy management

- Basic Dairy Husbandry
- Milking processes, sanitation, regulations
- Raw milk rules and regulations

5. Predator protection

- Guardian dogs

Reading

- USDA publication on guard dogs
- Wool management
- Shearing management
- Shearing techniques
- Wool marketing

Reading

- Wool Away! (Godfrey Bowen)
- Making More Money from Sheep website - wool module

6. Wool management

- Shearing management
- Shearing techniques
- Wool marketing

Reading

- Wool Away! (Godfrey Bowen)
- Making More Money from Sheep website - wool module

Assignment

- Assist in annual shearing
- Demonstrate ability to skirt and pack fleeces

7. Lamb processing

- Regulations
- Cuts of lamb and their uses
- Economics
- Other products
- Pelts

Reading

- Research cuts of lamb on the web

8. Marketing

- Farmers' markets
- Restaurants
- Buyer's clubs and CSA's
- Retail
- Wholesale
- Live animal marketing

Reading

- Marketing Strategies for Small-Scale Ranchers (powerpoint)

Assignment

- Processing and marketing pelts

9. Contract Grazing

- Setting goals for vegetation management
- Estimating cost and time
- Liability issues
- Public relations

Reading

- Sheep can't read and other tales (Dan Macon)

Assignment

- Prepare a grazing contract estimate, including all expenses (guard dog, stock water, labor to set up fence and keep moving it, mineral, etc.)

10. Business management

- Business planning
- Record keeping
- Financial records

Assignment

- Do an enterprise analysis of one aspect of the operation (i.e. a wool sheep profitability analysis)

10. Equipment operations

- Equipment safety
- Operating tractors and implements
- Tractor and implement maintenance.

11. Agritourism and Direct Marketing

- Logistics, logistics, logistics: Planning an agritourism event
- Agritourism marketing
- Financials for events - making agritourism a profit - not a cost center

Assignment

- Plan and implement a farm tourism activity such as a farm photo session, farm to table dinner, or festival event

Application Form

To be considered for the Farm Internship Program, please complete the following application.

In addition to your application, you are required to submit three letters of reference. Two should be professional references (work or study related), and one should be a personal reference who has known you for more than two years.

"*" indicates required fields

Name * _____

Email* _____

Address* _____

Phone (please include country code)* _____

Date of Birth* _____

Gender* _____

Acknowledgement of Program Details & Policies*

I have read and understand the Farm Internship Information & FAQs document listed above.

Sign _____

How did you hear about the Mesta Meadows Internship Program?*

Do you have a full, clean driver's license? _____

Have you ever operated a tractor? _____

SHORT REFLECTIONS

Please answer the following questions in a simple, but thoughtful, paragraph or two.

What experience have you had that will help to prepare you for working on a farm?

Please state three interesting things about yourself.*

Please describe other important details about yourself (goals, aspirations, hobbies, personal activities, medical information, ideological views, etc.).*

BRIEF ESSAY

Please write a brief essay (500 words or less) that addresses the following questions: What are your reasons for applying to the Mesta Meadows Internship Program? What do you envision will be the most exciting aspect for you? What do you hope to gain from this experience?*

Please write a brief essay (250 words or less) that reflects on what about the Internship and living at Mesta Meadows might be most challenging for you?*

Internship Agreement

Welcome Apprentice,

We value your decision to explore farming and are looking forward to your participation with us. To ensure that your time on our farm is educational and rewarding, please take the following agreement into consideration before we begin our season together. We will hold a place for you at our farm once you confirm with us that this agreement works for you. We need to have our full staff lined up and ready to go by early March, so please let us know as soon as possible if an emergency comes up and you cannot fulfill your commitment.

(Intern Responsibilities)

Your intern period will begin _____ and end _____. During these months, you will be asked to do a variety of tasks that may field and office work, animal husbandry, miscellaneous farm work, etc. Expect the work to be physically and mentally demanding and the conditions to vary. While you will not be pushed beyond your physical ability, we hope that you enter this experience in good overall health. The first two weeks will be considered a trial period and any specific needs or disabilities should be disclosed at this time.

Some of your responsibilities will include:

- Feeding and care of livestock
- General livestock welfare care
- Working in the farm retail store
- Farm maintenance
- Milking and processing milk
- Marketing: our retail store, Etsy store shipments, or attending livestock auctions
- Processing fiber for storage and shipment
- Lambing and lamb care
- Learning pricing and marketing practices

As an intern/apprentice, you will be required to work 40 hours per week on production-oriented projects. You will be asked to participate 5 1/2 days a week, for approximately 7 hours per day, also depending on weather, harvest urgency, etc. During the week we begin at 7 am and finish around 4 pm. During lambing season the days tend to be longer. The normal workweek is Tuesday through Saturday. On Saturdays you will work in the retail store, with the remaining days being farm days.

Every Tuesday morning, if possible, we will meet and review the activities of the previous week. This is a time when we will do a walk about the farm, lay out our work schedule/goals and interns can share any comments or concerns they have regarding their farm responsibilities. A good work ethic and attitude is essential. Each day will include a one-hour break for lunch.

During your time working with us you may take some personal time off, provided it does not conflict with the greater needs of the farm schedule. 7 days of advance notice are required. You will be given a minimum of 1/2 days off for every month of apprenticeship with us.

(Mesta Meadows Responsibilities)

In exchange for your help, we are interested in providing you with a dynamic, hands-on experience that will

allow you to explore farming as a profession and lifestyle. We plan to spend at least 3 hrs/week teaching the basic skills. Much of your learning will happen while we work on tasks together and we explain to you how and why we do our tasks the way we do. Additional projects and training are available for individuals that show a high degree of motivation, interest and commitment. In addition, we participate in association programs (Missouri Sheep Producers Association, Heartland Highland Cattle Association, etc.) and you will have the opportunity to attend some of these programs.

(Accommodation/Location/Amenities)

Mesta Meadows is located in Bollinger County, 35 miles west of Cape Girardeau a unique Rivertown on the Mississippi river. We are also 3 miles from Marble Hill, the nearest small town. We are located near several major parks and conservation areas including the Mark Twain National Forest, Castor River Conservation Area, Elephant Rocks, Johnston Shutins, and the Arcadia Valley. We are also 2 hours from St. Louis and 2 hours from Memphis. You will need your own transportation.

You will receive a small living stipend each month beginning with \$300 the first month, increasing \$50 per month to a maximum of \$600 per month, and the opportunity to use the designated produce from the farm. We provide dinner each day, and you are welcome to obtain food supplies from our farm production (primarily milk and meat). You will prepare breakfast and lunch for yourself in your own quarters. Housing arrangements will be as follows:

We have a full living suite in our walkout basement with your own access door, and a separate living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and laundry. Utilities and Wi-Fi are free.

Guests: Guests are welcome but they must fit in with our farm work schedule. You should check with folks on the farm to make sure the timing is good for their visit.

After you have read through this information, please sign and date the agreement below. If you have any questions or concerns, please make them known before returning this form by email, phone, or mail. The farm mailing address is 12005 State Highway 34, Glen Allen, MO 63751 and my phone number is 859 536 0767.

We hope that you benefit from your experience on our farm and we look forward to working with and learning from you as well. Welcome!

Intern Agreement

I, _____, have read and understand the terms of the above agreement. I am committed to staying for the duration of time stated above. If I feel there are conditions which will prevent this; I agree to meet with the farmers to discuss these immediately.

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

Farmer Agreement

I, Farmer, have read the information provided. If either I or the intern feel the agreement is not being followed, we will sit down together and discuss the problems and consequent options.

Signature _____ Date _____

Edward Crowley