

Northwind Farm Job Opening

Northwind Farm is a certified-organic seasonal dairy farm in South Walden, Vermont, in the beautiful, hilly Northeast Kingdom. Owners Geordie Lynd and Silene DeCiucies milk 85 cows on this farm on 100 owned and 350 leased acres of grass with help from their family and 2-3 parttime workers. We are seeking an additional full-time worker for the 2027 production season.

As a seasonal dairy, our workload follows a curve that changes through the season. We calve the entire herd on a compost pack and begin shipping milk and raising calves in March and April. During this time the worker will work closely with Silene and Geordie to care for close-up, calving, and fresh cows and newborn calves.

May and June are the critical beginning and climax of the grazing season as our cows are at their production peak and also when we harvest and store the top-quality hay that will feed the herd during their calving season the next spring. June is the beginning of the important breeding season as well. Calving season and these two months of grass management make or break the year and the farm takes just about all of our attention. We're happy to give it, knowing that more relaxed months are coming.

July and August bring a pleasant cruising feeling to the basic daily herd work as we get farther from fresh cows and newborn calves and the herds make their second, third, and fourth grazing tours through the pastures. We continue to make hay and usually have time to work on projects to improve the farm. This is also when we encourage a worker to take a week or so off to enjoy the summer.

September, October and November bring the transition from grazing only to the winter diet of baleage, the last haymaking, and the work of putting the pastures and hayfields to bed for the winter. We spread most of the farm's manure in the fall and continue to work on projects to make the next season easier than this one.

In December all cattle groups are on stored feed. We are milking the cows once a day, getting ready to dry the cows off, and making final preparations for winter.

March through August we expect 40 hours/week including six chore shifts (or 7 then 5 to give alternate weekends off). This reduces to five in September, October and November and four in December. January and February is our "off-season" and the worker's role on the farm, if any, will be determined by his/her desire for work vs time away and by whether the worker plans to return for the next year. Additional work beyond daily milking/chore responsibilities can be fit to the worker's skills and interests and can include other aspects of herd care, building maintenance and construction, equipment maintenance and repair, field work (manure and amendment spreading, hay making, trucking, pasture renovation), daily grazing management, high tensile fence construction and repair, and work in our sugarwoods, bandsaw mill, and woodlot.

The worker will meet with us for 15-30 minutes at the beginning of each working week to organize the week's work and 1-2 hours once per month to refine his/her role and maintain the worker/employer relationship. Additionally, we will meet in October to determine whether the worker and the farm plan to continue the arrangement the following year and what adjustments to the worker's role and compensation are needed if so.

Compensation depends on the worker but here's an idea of the range.

Person new to dairy farming but a quick learner with good references for reliability and good attitude? We're going to start you at \$20/hr and bump you up to \$22 at the beginning of July if you've grown into some responsibility and ability to accomplish daily tasks independently. As we get toward fall we'll do our best to keep you working close to 40 hours/week as long as possible. It's going to depend on your skills beyond dairy work and your self-directed nature to fill a full-time work schedule as the basic daily herd work diminishes.

Worker with a year or two of dairy experience and useful skills from other work experience: concrete work, truck driving, heavy equipment, mechanic work, welding, plumbing, electrical work, carpentry, logging, etc? We'll start you at \$22-24 and hope to raise that to \$24-25 during the season if you are a good team member, work efficiently in your familiar areas, and have the desire and ability to learn new things as you go. Maintaining a 40 hour schedule through the end of the year should be no problem—we may lean on some of your pre-dairy skills to fill up your fall schedule in some way that benefits the farm.

Experienced, invested worker seriously pursuing a career in grass-based dairy. Has experience with dairy cattle, equipment operation, and skills maintaining, building and repairing things. Has a natural tendency to approach the work as if the farm was his/her own but is a good and respectful team member and communicator. Wants to use this job as a stepping stone to running his/her own dairy operation. In this scenario, we would be seeing an opportunity to really improve the farm's forage productivity, labor efficiency, and business performance while we had such a driven and capable worker. We would pay a salary (or total "package" including housing, see below) in the range of \$50,000-\$65,000 for the ten month production year plus limited responsibilities over the two dry months. We would consider expanding the milking herd and/or entering a herd equity arrangement where a portion of the compensation is in the form of equity in the dairy herd. After a period of working with us here the worker would leave the farm with animals owned outright to start a herd or cash from a buyout to use as startup capital.

Housing is offered on the farm in an apartment above the farm shop with access to a full kitchen and a deck that looks out over our vegetable garden and small orchard. Heat, electricity and internet, and access to laundry are included. Alternatively the worker can opt for a housing/utilities allowance of \$1000/month and seek a rental off the farm. Milk, meat, and vegetables in season are provided from the farm.

Interested candidates, please contact northwindvt@gmail.com about this position.

