



# Volunteer Handbook

# Volunteer at Lower Sherwood

We always welcome volunteers on the farm! We have had companies, families, and individuals come from all over to support the legacy of Lower Sherwood and the McGrath family. We appreciate the time, talent, and expertise each volunteer offers. This document is meant to inform volunteers of relevant **policies and procedures** so that volunteers and staff have a mutual understanding of **expectations**.

## Definitions

As used in this handbook, the following terms shall, except where the context otherwise requires, have the following meanings. Such meanings are to be equally applicable to the singular and plural forms. “Lower Sherwood”, “Us”, “We”, or “Our” refers to Lower Sherwood, LLC, and its affiliates, or agents. “Volunteer” is an individual who, beyond the confines of paid employment, contributes their time and services to Lower Sherwood.

## Policies and Procedures

Volunteers are vital to the operation of Lower Sherwood, sharing their skills, talents, time, and experience to deliver or improve our programs and services. No matter where or how they choose to serve, volunteers assist us in the various aspects of our mission that include (but are not limited to):

- Animal care
- Animal showing, training, and competition
- Animal science
- Animal rescue
- Agriculture
- Agritourism
- Education
- Special events

Lower Sherwood recruits, accepts, and dismisses volunteers on the basis of personal competence and volunteer performance, without regard to race, creed, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, or handicap.

## Registration Form

Potential volunteers are required to complete an [application form](#) found on the volunteer page of Lower Sherwood's website when they are interested in volunteering.

## Orientation

If a potential volunteer meets the needs of the organization they will participate in a one-time, on-site, "Volunteer Orientation" on their first day. At the orientation, volunteers will learn about our organization and needed information concerning their jobs.

Task-specific orientation will be given around the property.

## Right of Refusal

Volunteers and staff members have the right to refuse an assignment. Contact the Owner or Volunteer Coordinator so changes can be made as needed.

## Feedback and Evaluation

Volunteers will be asked to evaluate their experience at the farm concerning orientation, volunteer work and value of their experience. This will be done through informal dialog, and a survey completed toward the end of a volunteer's commitment. Feedback and evaluation will be used to inform changes to our programs.

## Recognition

Volunteer service is very valuable to Lower Sherwood, and we will strive to do our best to recognize our volunteers informally and formally. An annual volunteer appreciation event will be held for those who have served.

## Confidentiality

Any records maintained on volunteers working with Lower Sherwood, including emergency information, dates and hours of service, and duties performed will be kept in a secure location and accessible only to the appropriate Lower Sherwood representatives. All requests for information about volunteers must be through the appropriate Lower Sherwood staff members. This information will be considered confidential.

## Documentation of Hours

Volunteers are responsible for signing up for preferred tasks through the Volunteer Application form used by Lower Sherwood. Volunteers are responsible for signing in on the day of their shift using the identified sign-in process and checking in with the Owner or Volunteer Coordinator, every time they volunteer. This allows Lower Sherwood to provide recognition of service, validate times of service as work experience for future job references and provides volunteer tracking data. Volunteers may obtain documentation

certifying their record of volunteer hours. Letters of recommendation may be requested after a minimum of 20 hours of quality service.

### Facilities and Parking

Volunteers will park in designated parking areas. All equipment, facilities and grounds are expected to be treated with respect and well cared for by all volunteers. The appropriate Lower Sherwood staff member must authorize use of the office equipment such as the fax, phone, and computer. Volunteers will have access to the equipment they need to perform their assigned duties.

### Media Contact

Volunteers may not speak to the media, as an official or unofficial spokesperson of Lower Sherwood. Any requests from the media should be directed to [hello@lowersherwood.com](mailto:hello@lowersherwood.com).

### Dependability and Punctuality

Volunteers are expected to be reliable, punctual, and dependable, but we understand that life happens. If a volunteer plans to be late for their scheduled time, they should email the Owner and Volunteer Coordinator ([volunteer@lowersherwood.com](mailto:volunteer@lowersherwood.com)) with a minimum 4 hour notice. Repeated late arrivals or absences may result in a volunteer being removed from the schedule with no notice.

### Discontinuation

A volunteer with Lower Sherwood has the right to end their service for any reason, or no reason. If a volunteer wishes to leave their service, we request they inform the Owner and/or Volunteer Coordinator.

Lower Sherwood reserves the same right, for the occasion when a volunteer does not uphold conduct standards or follow-through with volunteer sign-up and sign-in procedures.

Grounds for immediate dismissal may include, but not limited to gross misconduct or insubordination, breach of confidentiality, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while volunteering, theft of property or misuse of agency equipment or materials, illegal, violent, or unsafe acts, abuse (physical and /or emotional or mistreatment of animals, clients, volunteers, or staff), repeatedly missing volunteer shifts with no prior notice.

## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

All volunteers must adhere to the standards of conduct established by Lower Sherwood to fulfill the mission of Lower Sherwood Farm..

### Privacy

Lower Sherwood is a professional environment. Volunteers should never discuss the problems and/or confidences of clients, volunteers, and staff members with anyone who does not have a professional right to know.

### Confidentiality

There may be times when it becomes your duty to report confidential matters to persons in authority for the sake of the animals', staff or other volunteers' wellbeing. Please forward your concerns privately to the appropriate staff member and no one else.

### Harassment Policy

Harassment includes sexual, racial, and otherwise hostile, intimidating, or offensive behaviors. It is the policy of Lower Sherwood to treat volunteers, visitors, and staff with the respect and kindness they would want for themselves. Any volunteer who feels harassed should speak to an appropriate staff member such as the Owner or Volunteer Coordinator in an attempt to reach a resolution. It is the staff member's duty to listen to such complaints and to refer them to the appropriate authority.

### Grievance and Complaint

Procedure grievances and /or complaints concerning the work environment should be reported promptly to the Owner or Volunteer Coordinator. Every effort will be made to achieve a speedy and effective resolution. All grievances/complaints are treated as confidential.

### Personal Hygiene

All volunteers and staff members must wash their hands before handling any food. Hands must be washed thoroughly after using the restroom. When pandemics or epidemics strike, such as with COVID-19, we follow Albemarle County Public Health guidelines and request that our volunteers do the same.

### Dress Code

Lower Sherwood expects volunteers to dress appropriately and comfortably for the work they are doing. Volunteers are expected to demonstrate good judgment, and to not wear

clothing that is too revealing, or that other volunteers or staff may find offensive, or make them uncomfortable.

For safety reasons, long pants are recommended to deter ticks, and no open-toed shoes, sandals, or flip-flops are permitted. Long, flowing garments that have the potential to become tangled in moving equipment are strongly discouraged.

Clothing and grooming styles that are dictated by religion or ethnicity are exempt, but we may assign work

### Food

Volunteers can use the office refrigerator for personal lunches, but items must be removed at the end of every day. No food items should be stored in the refrigerator for more than 24 hours.

### Honesty

Volunteers are expected to demonstrate a high level of integrity and honesty in all aspects of their job performance. Honesty includes not falsifying information, not stealing from any volunteer, visitor, staff member, or Lower Sherwood, and not using the Lower Sherwood property, equipment, or facilities without authorization.

### Smoking, Drug and Alcohol Policy

The use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is not permitted while participating in work or volunteer shifts with Lower Sherwood. Implementing this policy ensures a safe, healthy, and productive environment for all volunteers, visitors, and staff members.

## SAFETY and LIABILITY

Lower Sherwood will do our best to provide safe conditions for our volunteers, visitors, and staff. Lower Sherwood counts on the volunteer, visitors, and the staff member to be the best protector of his or her own personal safety. Volunteers are expected to work safely, wear appropriate attire for the job, observe safety procedures, and report unsafe conditions. First Aid kits are available to take care of minor injuries. If you are in any doubt as to the safety of a particular piece of equipment or activity, please ask.

**BE PREPARED → BE CAREFUL**

### Animal safety

Every animal counts at Lower Sherwood. We act as a trusted voice for the animals in our care, and are led by science and our passion to give our animals the best life possible. All the animals in our care deserve a life where they can live free from hunger or thirst, injury or disease, and live freely to express their normal behaviors with other members of the same species. The work we do has the potential to transform the lives of animals around the world.

To these ends, animal health and safety is paramount. No work at Lower Sherwood should be undertaken that endangers the health and safety of the animals at the farm. In the event of animal illness or injury, staff members are available 24x7 and veterinarians are available on an “on call” basis. The telephone numbers for staff and veterinarians are posted in prominent locations throughout the premises. Animal medications are kept in a central location along with instructions for treatments and dosages. A large animal first aid kit is also available.

### Heat Stroke

Volunteers should take water breaks as needed. Hourly water breaks are strongly encouraged, especially when the temperature is over 90 degrees. While bottled water is available, volunteers should bring their own refillable water bottle.

Llamas and alpacas can suffer from heat exhaustion too, and volunteers will be trained on what to watch for when working with animals in the heat.

### Lyme Disease

Lower Sherwood strongly encourages the use of tick repellent, and while Lower Sherwood does have a number of insect repellents available, you are encouraged to bring your own. Long pants are required to deter ticks and for field safety. Ticks can hunt humans, so you are encouraged to stay away from tall grass when working out on the trails. Please conduct self-examination at the end of your workday.

## Sun Safety

Lower Sherwood strongly encourages the use of sunscreen and hats and light-colored clothing. While Lower Sherwood does have some sunscreen available, you are encouraged to bring your own sunscreen to reapply throughout the day.

## Dress for Safety

Safety glasses, work gloves, and other relevant safety equipment are available and should be worn when requested by a staff member and depending on volunteer duties.

## Thunderstorm Policy

Under the direction of staff, whenever thunder or lightning is present, all volunteers should move indoors until 30 minutes has passed with no thunder or lightning.

## Equipment and Tools

Tools and equipment should not be used without proper authorization and supervision from the appropriate staff member. The tools and equipment may only be used for the tasks for which it is intended.

## Machinery

Proper distance from all motorized machinery is no less than 50 feet. This 50-foot distance should be always maintained. Only authorized staff members may operate motorized machinery.

## Abuse

At no time will Lower Sherwood volunteer be a victim of abuse by any staff or volunteer. It is our policy to assure that firm disciplinary and/or legal action is taken against those who engage in abuse.

Abuse is defined as:

1. Physical, psychological, or verbal mistreatment which may hurt or wrongly use an individual.
2. Any injury that is afflicted willfully.
3. Inhumane treatment.
4. Lack of provision of basic sustenance.
5. Sexual Abuse:
  - A sexual act, as defined in Article 27, S 461 (e) of the Annotated Code of Virginia.
  - Sexual contact, as defined in Article 27, S 461 (f) of the Annotated Code of Virginia.



- Intercourse, as defined in Article 27, S 461 (g) of the Annotated Code of Virginia.

For the purpose of this policy, abuse does not include the performance of:

1. An accepted medical procedure that a physician orders.
2. An accepted behavioral procedure that is either ordered by a licensed psychologist or formulated by the school or Virginia Vocational Training Center or job coach. The behavioral procedure must conform to other appropriate Lower Sherwood policies.
3. Acts on the part of a staff member, volunteer, or another client which occur in self-defense shall not be considered abusive if the act is one which meets force with the least amount of force necessary to protect oneself. However, overreaction in the name of self-defense shall also be considered abuse.

Abuse of animals will not be tolerated. Cruelty to animals is a crime in Virginia, and volunteers found to be abusing animals, or causing abuse to happen will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

### Incident Reports

Incidents include abuse (as defined in the above paragraph), unusual circumstances, injuries, accidents, and situations that could develop into accidents. If an incident occurs involving or witnessed by a volunteer, the appropriate staff member should be informed immediately. Incidents need to be documented within 24 hours by the appropriate Lower Sherwood staff member. The staff member may require a volunteer's assistance with filling out the incident form if they witness an incident requiring a report.

### Legal Liability

As a volunteer you agree to assume the risk of any injury or accident to person or property which you may sustain in connection with your participation with Lower Sherwood. In addition, you agree to release and discharge Lower Sherwood and any of its directors, employees, volunteers, partners, and affiliates and successors from any and all liability or responsibility for any such accident or injury.

### Certificate of Ability

A volunteer may be asked to present a certificate from the physician if they have indicated they are under the care of a physician for any physical or psychological ailment which might impede their ability to perform their duties safely. If a volunteer or staff member enters a course of treatment, which might adversely impact the performance of their duties, they should consult with the Owner or Volunteer Coordinator.

## Safeguarding Possession

Volunteers are responsible for safeguarding their personal possessions while on the property.

## Medical Release

In the event that an emergency should arise while volunteering at Lower Sherwood that requires medical treatment, volunteers are financially responsible for any costs incurred as a result of such treatment including, but not limited to, transportation, medical procedures, prescription drugs, surgery, and imaging. Lower Sherwood does not provide health insurance to volunteers, and Lower Sherwood is absolved from any and all liability for their acts rendered in good faith.

## Inherent Risks

The volunteer opportunities that we provide have a number of inherent risks that may not be immediately obvious, including (but not limited to) risks of injury inherent to land, equipment, and animals (both wild and domesticated), as well as the potential for volunteers to act in a negligent manner that may contribute to their injury or death.

Under Virginia law, We have no liability for Your injury or death if such injury or death results from these inherent risks and You assume all risk in participating in Services that We offer.

You assume all liability for the injury or death of any and all livestock, damage to land and crops, and damage to any equipment or structures that are participating in an Service with You either directly or incidentally.

Virginia Code 3.2-6402 (A) requires us to include this notice:

**WARNING:** Under Virginia law, there is no liability for an injury to or death of a participant in an agritourism activity conducted at this agritourism location if such injury or death results from the inherent risks of the agritourism activity. Inherent risks of agritourism activities include, among others, risks of injury inherent to land, equipment, and animals, as well as the potential for you to act in a negligent manner that may contribute to your injury or death. You are assuming the risk of participating in this agritourism activity.