

Mesa Top Farm
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Opportunity: Intermediate level farm position available with lots of room for growth!

Mesa Top Farm and Ranch began in 1994 as Beneficial farm and was one of the first CSAs in New Mexico. Bio-intensive vegetable production with many Biodynamic practices built several acres of very rich soil. There has been no produce for a couple of years though it will hopefully resume when young farmers are found.

Chickens for egg production were added in year one and eggs for wholesale and development of Beneficial Egg brand continues today. The first cow, a Tarentaise, was added in 2000 and a small herd of high altitude raised and adapted Ayrshire added in 2007. Now there are 20 momma cows and 20-25 heifers and variety of calves and a few bulls. Pigs were added just a few years ago: Red Wattles and Kune Kune (cross). There are 5 sows now. We have grown meat chickens and turkeys. Equipment for poultry processing is on hand. We have processed a couple of cows on site but most go to USA plant and are sold as "Mesa Top Meats". We have a small milking parlor and cheese making equipment and have made aged raw milk cheese on modest scale

The farm was home for a lot of training events for its first 10-15 years. Now there is a "tiny house village" and a couple of overnight and short-term camping sites. Appropriate technology implementation and demonstration are foundational to this farm/ranch: the alchemy of the west is to turn sun into water by using PV to power pumps. Wetland restoration is ongoing and is supported by PV water systems. Managing climatic extremes, using water catchment and producing crops with drip irrigation are also central.

We value a healthy ecosystem and balance of wild species with the economically viable production of food through rotational grazing and regenerative agriculture practices.

The Position

This is an intermediate level position, and is ideal for someone with enough agricultural experience that they already know that they're interested in and suited for agricultural work. No specific skills are required. Attitude and mindset are more important. Lots of opportunities for growth.

REQUIRED:

- commitment to a sound, improving work ethic;
- good observation and communication skills (ability to "observe and describe");
- consistency and ability to recognize what contributes to your success and what detracts from it;
- resilient and resourceful;
- grounded and recognize and appreciate that much of farming/ranching is not glamorous;
- simple living and "low maintenance";

- a sense of team along with a good sense of self;
- patience and persistence.

DESIRED:

- “system thinker” or aware of and interested in learning more;
- some craft/music/art/movement/athletics as these dedications/disciplines are indicators of ability to innovate, adapt, cooperate, improvise, etc.

The Work

The activities listed below reflect a range of levels of engagement and skill building. Chores and development of basic observational and reporting skills are the foundation. Over a period of 30-60 days, we will work closely together and then have a discussion to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities. This is also the point at which agreement can be reached about how long the employee wants to remain, and the scope of job duties aligned with that time frame.

Daily Chores: animal feeding, wildlife and habitat monitoring, solar electrical and water system monitoring and basic maintenance.

Maintenance and improvements: repair and maintenance of facilities and upgrading/repurposing for current uses

Production: many possibilities exist here: training cows for milking, milking, cheesemaking, raising meat birds, processing under 1k exemption, greenhouse/garden vegetable production.

Next step activities: egg packing, delivery, other product delivery (frozen meats), customer service/management.

Potential challenges that the employee could help identify solutions to, depending on interests: Energy and resource conservation measures; improvements for livestock quality of life; restoration and resumption of milking and cheesemaking; restoration and resumption of produce growing, indoor and outdoor; social media web presence and “modernization” of communication channels; establishing/maintaining people-friendly data gathering and record keeping. You name it and I bet we got it!

Seasonality: Year-round animal raising includes all possible tasks associated with animals of every stage of life, from birthing to dealing with the deaths that do occur. Repair and maintenance are year-round. Egg production and distribution are year-round, and are a central part of daily chores. Calving is largely late fall/winter. The pig cycle is just establishing itself as the first piglets born here were last fall and second was this summer. Baby chicks usually started in spring but likely a small winter set this year as well. Winter has more focus on maintenance and repair. Spring is preparation for growth and growing season. Summer is time for adaptation to whatever the monsoons do or don't bring. Fall is wind down and harvest and prepare for winter.

Nuts & Bolts

Timeline: Help needed as soon as available, ideally by the beginning of November. Commitment through at least Spring/April is preferred.

Hours and Wages: Starting at \$15/hour. Enough hours available to net \$1,000+ per month after accounting for housing. Exact hours/days per week to be determined based on the candidate.

Food: On hand are nearly every kind of animal protein: beef, pork, chicken, eggs. Milking cows. Employee will have access to a reasonable amount, to be determined.

Housing: One residence will be kept empty and available for staff, and parts of it will be getting work done over the winter. It has full facilities. It includes bedrooms that are well separated from the areas being worked on. Wash and dryer available. Good quality Wi-Fi in all buildings. Cell phone signal is spotty (Verizon is best). We like to pay people a fair and agreed-upon wage, and charge a fair amount for rent.

Vehicles: Having your own vehicle is helpful (4x4 not required, but is extremely helpful to have). Employee will be expected to learn how to operate various farm vehicles and equipment.

Time off: The days are long but rarely continuous. Work schedules can flex to be sure that a person has blocks of time for study, art, personal interests. At least 1 full day off per week is certain. Some planning required to arrange 2 or more days off in a row. After an immersion period (about 4 to 6 weeks), appropriately compensated, scaling back to as little as 25 hours / equivalent to about 4 days could make sense.

Visitors: Visitors up to several days that do not interfere with staff person's ability to keep up with their responsibilities are generally fine, and they need to follow the same guidance as we all do regarding health and safety. Longer stays can generally be figured out with the same considerations in mind. It is essential to communicate plans.

Guns, alcohol, and tobacco: Guns are permitted. Limited and responsible use of tobacco or alcohol only – no litter, no secondhand smoke that affects others, and no drunkenness.

Animals: Pets or personal working animals are allowed, as long as they are properly trained or being trained and/or controlled to minimize risk to livestock and other people.

Covid-19 precautions: It's hard to get a feel for this but will require more specificity as we approach winter. I wear a mask a lot of times due to dust and related exposure and history of respiratory conditions since July 2019 (pre-Covid). Since there is plenty of distance/space, and very few people, social distancing is easy. If someone has been exposed to a Covid infected person they are asked to isolate until the results are known. Frequent hand washing is encouraged. If a person has requirements that they feel strongly about they can be considered, and if agreed on, everyone will respect them. I believe this approach is essential since the situation is constantly changing

Living at Mesa Top Farm: Mesa Top Farm is located 20 miles Southeast of Santa Fe, New Mexico, the state capitol. There is a very active local foods community in Santa Fe, and regenerative ranching and farming community in New Mexico in general. There are a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities and public lands within 100 miles. Rowe Mesa, where Mesa Top Farm and Ranch is located, is a place of quiet as there is no power or pavement for 6+ miles and very little development even though it is close to Santa Fe. Its eco-system is diverse: pinyon pine and juniper with deep canyons and escarpments. There is a Mesa Verde – like "ruin" and pictographs on the farm property in a deep canyon 200 yards or so from the farm house. About 250 acres of the land has been archaeologically surveyed and temporally diagnostic artifacts from early archaic to pueblo times, have been found, as

have civil war (battle of Glorieta) and homestead era artifacts. Solitude and reflection to enjoy the prairie west, but with close access to a growing, vibrant city and plenty of recreational activities only 45 minutes' drive away.

About Steve

I am farmer by choice, not birth. I bought the first piece of this land in 1977 when I was 19 with my savings as down payment instead of returning to college for senior year. I wanted to build up a place that was "founded" on appropriate technology like solar and wind power and water catchment and other modern resources used to enhance and restore environment. I got my grounding in this life dream in boy scouts in my teens and learned forestry and conservation in New England where I was raised. I "always" knew I was headed to NM, and eventually got here as a college student in 1976. I was always athletic and eventually ended up running ultra-marathon and mountain trail races and had a nice career before I "retired" to farm in mid 90's.

In 2007 I took a full-time job at La Montanita COOP (based in Albuquerque) and helped open one of the country's first regional food hub/distribution center and to provide ongoing support for other small farm and food businesses as "Enterprise Development manager." I have gotten deeply involved in addressing barriers to market access due to government regulation, US agriculture policy, and development of programs to support local/regional food systems. I also work as Senior Technical Advisor to the Wallace Center at Winrock International.

Application Instructions:

Send an email to steve@plateautel.net explaining your interest in the position. If you have a resume please attach it, but it is not required. Inquires will be considered as they come in, so please reach out as soon as possible.