



White Oak Pastures Internship Program

White Oak Pastures, a model of the highest standards of animal welfare, holistic farm management and regenerative agriculture, offers a Farm Internship Program that is the most comprehensive in the country. The scale, diversity, and vertical integration of this farm makes this unique training experience possible.

We have chosen to divide our internship into two different focuses: a pastured production internship and an agritourism internship. These opportunities are outlined below. Interns have the ability to participate in either of these in any order. **Applicants must apply for each internship independently.**

Each intern will be required to pay a \$350 deposit upon acceptance into either program. The deposit will be refunded upon completing the entire internship session or if the intern is offered and accepts a full-time position with White Oak Pastures prior to completing the internship. If the intern leaves the program for any reason before the end of the internship the entire deposit is forfeited.

We offer four 12-week sessions per year:

Spring session begins the second week of February

Summer session begins the second week of May

Fall session begins the second week of August

Winter session begins the second week of November

Farm & Animal Production Internship:

- Requires a 12-week commitment.
- Will be non-skill specific, and will require a rotation through a number of different businesses. [Seasonality might affect some business operations].
- Salary: \$8 per hour for all hours worked. No time-and-a-half over 40 hours.

Exposure to, and training in, the following businesses are available:

- Grassfed Cattle Production
- Grassfed Sheep Production
- Grassfed Goat Production
- Pastured Rabbit Production
- Pastured Hog Production
- Egg Production and Processing
- Certified Organic Vegetable Production
- Composting and Carpentry
- Holistic Pasture Management
- Beekeeping
- Zero waste Makerspace

Agritourism Internship

- Requires a 12-week commitment.
- Will be non-skill specific, and will require a rotation through a number of different businesses. [Seasonality might affect some business operations].
- Salary: \$8 per hour for all hours worked. No time-and-a-half over 40 hours.

Exposure to, and training in, the following businesses are available:

General Store (3 weeks):

- Ordering
- Receiving
- Inventory
- Stocking
- Scheduling
- Customer Facing Reservation System
- Revenue Management

Dining (3 weeks)

- Logistics of Dining
- Leadership and Communication with Customers
- Event Set-up

White Oak Pastures Restaurant (3 weeks) -Restaurant Management

- Scheduling
- Menu Planning
- Revenue Management
- Ordering
- Coordination with Event Planning Team and Store

Event Planning (3 weeks)

- Event Logistics
- Event Contracts
- Farm Tourism
- Scheduling
- Lodging Logistics
- Leadership Management and Communication

Application Process

To apply for any internship, complete and submit the online application. You may also print a blank application to fill out by hand and email to Will Harris at: will.harris@whiteoakpastures.com

Internship Expectations

As an intern, you will report to different supervisors during the various segments of your training. It is your job to follow the leadership of this supervisor, who will be tasked with keeping you productively occupied. It is our vision to teach you to become a self-sufficient farmer or butcher, not just in one area, but with a holistic approach to agriculture, animal husbandry, land restoration and butchery. If your supervisor asks you to help with another department, then do it with a smile. We operate as a whole. You are not here to occupy

a specific position or to perform a specific task, you are expected to contribute to the working organism that is White Oak Pastures. Your education and training will occur in this process. For example, if you focused on livestock, you could certainly learn from the Organic Vegetable crew, who grows most of our feed for rabbits. What is feed for one is a weed from another. All things are strengthened when they are bound to themselves.

Housing is available on-farm in Bluffton, GA. Living in the “intern house” is not mandatory, but if the apprentice elects to do so, White Oak Pastures’ rules must be complied with. If you would like to see a copy of the lease or rules, please email debi.mcdade@whiteoakpastures.com.

Interns are eligible for the 50% restaurant discount for the daily special and the 20% store discount that is offered to all full-time employees.

You must bring your own transportation with you.

Interns/Apprentices may have their training and employment terminated at any time, by management, for not obeying work rules, insubordination, tardiness, absence, or other unacceptable behavior.

Lifestyle Transition

Moving to Southwest Georgia can be quite a shock. You will be 180 miles from the nearest dependable airport. You will be 90 miles from the nearest Whole Foods. You will be 50 miles from the nearest Target, Walmart, shopping mall and Publix. You will be 15 miles from the nearest gas station, dollar store, and grocery store. Most view this as a beautiful place to be, but if you are used to yoga studios and coffee shops on each corner, prepare to adjust.

The ability to make yourself happy is important. As a White Oak Pastures employee, you will be treated fairly and given the necessary tools to do the tasks assigned to you, but the ability to be happy is up to you. Many of us work 12-hour days. Many of us get our fill for socialization at work. As long as you are working, and are able to accomplish what is expected of you, have some fun while doing it.

White Oak Pastures has a very special culture—one that has been building since the very beginning. Everyone works hard and plays hard. We are a profane and irreverent people, but at everyone’s core is respect. White Oak Pastures is one of the few places that you can be dismissed for being disrespectful as quickly as you can be dismissed for theft. Being nice to one another is the standard operating procedure, and it is a centerpiece of our Culture. Most of the time, when lines get crossed, it’s because of miscommunication, not because a person is mean spirited. We are all passionate about what we do, which adds a fragile, but powerful dynamic to our work.

Living Quarters

You are welcome to look for housing in the surrounding communities (Bluffton, Edison, Arlington, Colquitt, Damascus, Fort Gaines, Blakely, etc.). There are no apartment complexes in our part of the state.

We are proud to offer our interns on-farm housing! The “intern house” is a spacious home in Bluffton which can be shared by a maximum of 6 interns per session. It is fully furnished and the only thing interns need to bring are bed and bath linens. The cost is \$275 per month, including utilities, and is deducted on a weekly basis. **Sorry, but no pets allowed!**

White Oak Pastures General Store and The Farmer’s Table Restaurant

In 2016 we completed the renovation of an old store in Bluffton and it now offers White Oak Pastures meat and poultry products, honey, eggs, leather goods, pet chews, and tallow items, locally produced artisan items, as well as every day necessity items. The store is open seven days a week, and interns will receive a 20% discount on all purchases.

The Farmer's Table Restaurant is open seven days a week, three meals a day. It is located in the west wing of the general store and serves White Oak Pastures products in a casual setting. Interns receive a 50% discount on the daily lunch buffet special, and 20% off all other restaurant items.

About White Oak Pastures

White Oak Pastures History

The Harris family has raised cattle on the same South Georgia farm for five generations. Stewardship of the land and respect for our livestock are among the most important lessons that we pass from parent to child.

Captain James Edward Harris (Cavalry - CSA) (1st generation) founded our family farm soon after the Civil War. He and the sharecroppers who worked this land butchered a cow, several hogs, and a few chickens every Saturday. This was the staple food of the 100 or so people who lived on this farm during the late 1800's.

In the early part of the 20th century, James' son, Will Carter Harris (2nd generation), ran the place. During this time, they butchered a cow, several hogs, and a few chickens every morning before sunup six days a week.

The meat was loaded on a mule drawn wagon and hauled three miles up a dirt road to the town of Bluffton. There it was delivered to four general stores, a hotel, and a boarding house. Later a commissary was built on our farm, which grew the business even further.

After World War II, Will Bell Harris (3rd generation) ran the farm. It was during his watch that the traditional system of producing and distributing beef, lamb, and poultry eroded. Science introduced a bevy of new chemical tools to the farm, and the slaughtering process became more and more centralized and distant from our pastures. During the latter half of the 20th century, our farm only produced calves for the industrial beef production system that furnishes most of the food we eat in this country. Our farm became a monoculture.

Nature abhors a monoculture.

Our farm and family have now come full circle. Today we raise 10 species of livestock. We process the animals on the farm, and market the beef, lamb, goat, pork, poultry, rabbits, eggs and vegetables directly to consumers who appreciate our artisan products.

The transition started in 1995 when Will Harris III (4th generation) made the conscious decision to return to a production system that is better for the environment, for our animals, and for the people who eat these meats. He reinstated the multi-species rotational grazing practices of his forefathers, and he built abattoirs on the farm to slaughter our animals. Please click on the following links to learn more about our family's commitment to the welfare of our [animals](#), [environmental sustainability](#), and [locally produced food](#).

In 2010, the family tradition deepened as Will's daughter, Jenni Harris, joined the White Oak Pastures team full time. In 2014, another of Will's daughters (5th generation) joined the team, Jodi Harris Benoit. Jenni and Jodi mark the fifth generation of Harrises to raise livestock on this farm. Today, White Oak Pastures employs over 175 people and produces grassfed beef, lamb, and goat, pastured poultry, pork, and eggs, and Certified Organic vegetables.

The Agricultural Evolution:

Progress was very slow from the time that humans began planting crops and husbanding food animals, until midway of the 20th century. The iron plow was developed, animals were harnessed for cultivation, a few other innovations, but there was very little sweeping change. Then, beginning in 1945 a perfect storm

developed. More change was implemented in the following 70 years than had occurred since the first man planted the first seed, or captured the first live animal for food.

World War II had decimated Europe's capacity to produce food. G.I.'s returning to the farm had been exposed to internal combustion engines in the service to their country. The munitions manufacturing capacity of the U.S. was repurposed to produce chemical fertilizers. Nerve gas research led to the development of the first pesticides. The hybridizing of seeds was developed.

Will Bell Harris (3rd generation) told a story that really brings home the seduction, and unintended consequences, of the post World War II agricultural industrialization:

In 1945, Will Bell Harris (3rd generation) was invited to a local farm store to a sponsored supper and farmer meeting. The sponsor was the salesman for a new chemical fertilizer company.

Chemical fertilizers had been invented long prior to 1945, but they were very expensive and almost never used. After the war, munition factories were re-purposed to make these chemical fertilizers instead of explosives. For the first time ever, chemical fertilizers were cheap and abundant. Farmers had no experience with this 'new' product, so salesmen were hired to put on demonstrations to show farmers how much 'productivity' this reductionist science tool could add to the farm.

The salesman had a couple of 100 pound sacks of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. After supper he gave each farmer 10 pounds in a small bag, with the request that the farmer take it home, broadcast it in a small area of his pasture, water it, and not look at it for a week.

At the end of the week, the grass that had been treated with the chemical fertilizer was 12 inches higher than the surrounding pasture. It was also more succulent and much greener. Beginning that year, for the next 50 years, ammonium nitrate was applied at least once each year to every acre of White Oak Pastures. Sometimes it was applied two or three times per year.

What Will (3rd generation) saw was the very obvious visual benefit of the industrial tool. What he could not see was the invisible, and nearly irreparable, harm that it caused. The unintended consequences of this application was the oxidation of virgin organic matter and the killing off of beneficial microbes in the soil. Damage that caused the soil to need artificial life support for decades.

We believe that all of the tools that reductionist scientists have given to agriculture have had unintended consequences. Antibiotics, artificial hormones, pesticides, GMO's, unnatural feedstuffs, chemical fertilizers, and other non-natural products are suspect in our minds.

The Agricultural Revolution:

Beginning with this Post World War II Agricultural Revolution, Will Bell Harris' (4th generation) generation Commoditized, Centralized and Industrialized American farm production. This was done for noble reasons, and these changes made food cheap, abundant and "safe" (in one limited sense of that word).

- **Commoditization**- "Minimum Standards" were set for farm commodities (cotton, corn, peanuts, etc). Farmers were no longer incentivized to make their production the best that it could be. Market price was paid for products as long as it met the minimum standard. Farmers would go broke if they put increased quality into a product, because he could never extract this added value from the marketplace.
- **Centralization**- Production and, more importantly, processing operations were relocated and stratified geographically. Vegetables in California. Corn and Soy in the Midwest. Cotton and Peanuts in the South. Cattle feeding in the West. Etc. Etc. Etc. This dried up and debilitated small,

- family-owned, hometown processing throughout rural America, because larger factory farms could process more cost effectively.*
- **Industrialization-** *The factory farm model was embraced. Shirts were made in the shirt factory, so pigs were made in the pig factory. Cars were made in the car factory, so chickens were made in the chicken factory. Catering labor, equipment and other necessities of processing to a few specific functions, cost was further driven down. Unfortunately, this change ignored the complexities of the living animal system.*

This Revolution was wildly successful in achieving its goals. These revolutionary changes caused food to become obscenely cheap, wastefully abundant, and pass for "safe." But, these changes had horrific unintended consequences on the welfare of our farm animals, the degradation of our natural resources, and the economy of rural America.

- **Animal Welfare-** *Post World War II, the standard for good animal welfare was that the herdsman, or the system, did not intentionally inflict pain and suffering. The absence of pain and suffering was considered to be perfectly acceptable animal welfare. Today, we have returned to the understanding that good animal welfare also means providing the animal with an environment in which they can express instinctive behavior.*
- **Environmental Degradation-** *Topsoil Loss, endangered wildlife species, escalated greenhouse gasses, dead areas in the seas, pesticide contamination, antibiotic resistant pathogens, diminished resources, water shortage and contamination, and a host of other disasters have only been with us for the last 70 years. Industrialized farming or "factory farming" has been an enormous contributor to these, and other environmental problems.*
- **The Impoverishment of Rural America-** *Prior to the Industrialization, every rural community processed its farm production locally. These foods were also consumed locally. Every farm community had an abattoir and butcher, a grist mill, a creamery, a vegetable packing shed, and all other necessary infrastructure to maintain a local foodshed. Farmers strove to increase the value of their production by adding as much quality as they could. In essence, they were competing against each other in their local market. After the Centralization, the goal was to merely meet "minimum standards" and accept commodity prices for it. In this system, a product recall of million of pounds of products could not occur.*

At White Oak Pastures, during this period, our farm transitioned into the same commoditized, industrialized, and centralized model as our neighbors. Had Will Bell Harris (4th generation) not done so, the Harris family would not own White Oak Pastures today. After operating the farm as a model of humane and sustainable farming for 80 years, we ran the farm on the Post WWII model for the next 50 years.

Then, in the mid 1990's, we began recognizing that the benefits of 'modern agriculture' had horrible unintended consequences. these consequences manifested in the lack of humane treatment of our animals, the degradation of our lands, and the impoverishment of rural America. We have spent the last 20 years correcting these mistakes:

*We **De-commoditized-** We now produce five pastured red meat proteins, five pastured poultry proteins, pastured eggs, Certified Organic vegetables, and much more. All of these products are sold under our proud White Oak Pastures label. We put our name, and brand, onto every package that leaves our farm. Our products are not commodities. They are our artisan creations. Along with these creations, we focus on utilizing each part of the animals we process. This has created several small scale ancillary businesses that add value to the farm as a whole.*

*We **De-industrialized-** We do not operate our farm as a monocultural factory. We operate it as a living ecosystem. 10 species of humanely treated animals live in symbiotic relationships with each other. Our lands are holistically managed to become increasingly a living organic medium that is teeming with life.*

*We **De-centralized**- We built processing abattoirs to allow us to vertically integrate our production system. This gave us full control over the quality of our products. It also caused us to hire 120 employees making us the largest privately owned employer in the county. It also allowed us to breathe life into our 200 year old farm village, Bluffton, that had slipped almost into oblivion.*

Here are the steps that we have taken toward taking our farm to a Kinder and Gentler Agriculture:

In 1995, we decided the right thing to do for our cattle herd would be to transition to a grass-fed pastured program. We gave up the confinement feeding grain, hormone implants, and antibiotics. Making this change flew in the face of the tried-and-true way of raising cattle, but we did it.

In 2000, we decided the right thing to do for our land would be to cease using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. It was economically painful, but we did it.

In 2005, we decided the right thing to do for our animals and for our customers would be to build our on-farm USDA-inspected beef abattoir. There was only one other in the country. It was an enormous economic risk, but we took it.

In 2009, we decided it was wrong for our land and our herd to operate a monoculture of cattle. We acquired a herd of sheep, and raised chickens in our pastures. It was an incredibly steep learning curve, but we did it.

In 2010, we decided Certified Organic vegetables had a place at White Oak Pastures. With making our own compost from the eviscerate of the animals we processed, diversifying our farm into vegetable production was the right thing to do.

In 2011, we decided it would be necessary to construct an on-farm USDA-inspected poultry abattoir. We added ducks, geese, guineas, and turkeys to our flocks. White Oak Pastures became the only farm in the United States with its own red meat and poultry on-farm, USDA-inspected abattoirs. It was another incredible economic risk and another steep learning curve, but we did it.

In 2012, we built an on-farm restaurant to feed our 100 (now 120) employees. Our open-aired Pavilion, located on the edge of our Organic Vegetable farm, serves lunch every day and supper Wednesday through Saturday. The White Oak Pastures Pavilion is one of the only restaurants in the state that is dual-inspected by the Health Department and the Department of Agriculture. This was not an easy endeavor, but we did it.

In 2013, we raised 10,000 laying hens to maturity to take our pastured egg production to another level. Currently we have 12,000 chickens who live, roost and lay outside in our pastures, never confined to a crate or cage. Our eggs are candled, graded and packed on the farm five days each week.

In 2014, we invested in lodging at White Oak Pastures, in order to further our commitment in the education of sustainable agriculture. White Oak Pastures needed to become more of a destination, attracting customers that are passionate about the food production system. Restoring older houses and investing in the rural and desolate town of Bluffton was not convenient or inexpensive, but we did it.

In 2014, we started making biodiesel from cooking grease to power our tractors. We also learned how to render down our grassfed beef tallow to make tallow soap. Every day, we are learning how to manage by-products.

In 2015, White Oak Pastures was named a Savory Hub, one of only twenty nine in the world. We also held a 8 day intensive training on the farm, led by one of the Savory educators, to educate 25 of the White Oak Pastures managers.

In 2015, we began reconstruction on the 175 year old Herman Bass Store. After sitting vacant for 40 years, the store acted as a time capsule for general stores past. Because White Oak Pastures attracts so many visitors, we found it necessary to improve our ability to market our unique artisan creations.

In 2016, we decided to only feed GMO-free grains to our pastured pork and poultry. After years of searching for a source that could commit to the volume we need, we were able to find a supplier to consistently deliver to White Oak Pastures.

In 2016, we purchased an additional 250 acres of industrially farmed land to transition into pasture. [Bringing the farm to a total of 2500 acres, 1500 owned and 1000 rented]. It will take years of good animal land management to rebuild this eroded soil, but it's an investment we know is important to continuing our commitment to Regenerative Animal Agriculture.

In 2018, we had a life cycle assessment performed on our farm which showed White Oak Pastures as a carbon sink.

In 2020, we began grazing Silicon Ranch's solar site "Bancroft," making renewable energy regenerative.

In 2021, we constructed an RV park for out of town guests to learn about regenerative agriculture.

We are now certain this journey to do the right things for our land and animals is endless. We will come to realize there are other steps we must take, and as we figure out what these next steps are, we will take them.

Animal Welfare-

On the path to defining our farm, we spent a lot of time thinking of what animal welfare truly means. We focused on making compassionate animal treatment one of our basic tenants. In addition to not inflicting pain and suffering on an animal, we understand that good animal welfare also means providing the animal with an environment in which they can express their instinctive behavior. Chickens were created to scratch and peck. Cows were created to roam and graze. Hogs were created to root and wallow. These instincts must be accommodated.

Many consumers' only relationship with animals is with their companion animals. Unlike many of our consumers, we have had the privilege of learning the complexity that comes with the number of 'classes' of animals on our farm. We love all of these classes, but we love them all differently. Much like a person loves their spouse, children, siblings and friends in different ways. When we explained our production system to interested consumers, we were often asked "How can you have a baby calf born, raise it for two years, then slaughter it for food?" The short answer was always that doing this was not an emotional act for us. We have always viewed it as a way to feed ourselves. But when answering these important questions, we often felt as though we were giving a non-answer, and we take pride in being transparent and clear. This answer never seemed to bridge the gap of the two different ways of thinking. We had to really anguish over why an act that caused so much angst in these good, caring people did not set off an emotional reaction for us too.

With a lot of thought and conversation, we have defined a few different classes of animals on our farm:

Companion Animals- *We love our dog, exactly the same way a person living in a high-rise, metropolitan condominium loves their pet "Rover." We feel compassion for the individual. If our dog dies, we will all grieve.*

Work Animals- *We love our herding dogs, and guardian dogs, and horses in a completely different way. We have enormous respect and gratitude for the training they have, and the contribution that they make to the organism that is White Oak Pastures.*

Food Animals- *We love our food animals collectively, as a herd or flock, not necessarily as individuals. We love the calving, kidding, farrowing, lambing, hatching. We look forward to harvesting the last livestock crop in order to make a place for the new livestock crop. For us, food animal life can be viewed as a river, not a lake.*

Wildlife- *We love our wildlife as a part of the natural system that we attempt (and imperfectly) try to emulate in our food animal production system. We have taken great pride in the repopulation of Bald Eagles on our*

farm. We often wonder how much of a resurgence of the threatened iconic predator species we would see if more farmers let their food animals out of captivity in animal factories.

People- *We love the Butchers, Cowboys, Cooks, Clerks, Farmers, and other contributing people of White Oak Pastures. Together, we are all farmers, who help this organism function every day. These good, talented, passionate folks put the CULT in AgriCULTure.*

Customers- *Customers are the only reason that we are able to farm the way we love. Because of these educated people not settling with the industry norm, we are able to put the costs of production back into agriculture and provide a better life for the animals, environment and people.*

Insects- *John Muir told that- In nature, when you pull a string, you see that everything is connected. We have discovered that, as reductionist science tools have unintended negative consequences, that insect pests almost always perform a vital function. the ancient Greeks told us that- for every pestilence that Nature sends...she sends the cure. We have learned that many essential functions are performed by 'pests.'*

Microbes- *We love the microbes that live in the soil. We cherish them, and look for ways to help them thrive. We believe that by running a zero-waste farm, making compost from inedible bones and viscera, we provide them a medium to thrive. Without this valuable form of life, the circle of Birth-Death-Decay-Birth would stall.*

Environmental Restoration-

Dr. George Washington Carver is a hero of ours. He told us, "In Nature there is no waste". We endeavor to run our farm by this standard.

We are the only farm in the United States that has both a red meat and white meat poultry abattoirs on the property. Our processing plants and systems were designed by Dr. Temple Grandin, the internationally recognized authority on humane animal handling and slaughter. She is a Doctor of Animal Science and champion of animal welfare. Our facilities are designed to keep our animals as calm as possible. The animals are held in open pens until they are dispatched. The captive bolt for cattle, and Electrical Stun Knife for poultry, is administered by a trained employee and renders the animal senseless to prevent suffering. This procedure is performed by hand, one at the time, and the process is taken very seriously. We slaughter 35 head of cattle per day and 1,000 chickens per day. An industrial processing plant may slaughter over 6,000 cattle per day, or 200,000 chickens per day. Our abattoirs are not efficient, they are humane.

Both of our plants are zero-waste operations. All blood is digested to make liquid organic fertilizer, all bones are ground to make bone meal, and all eviscerate is composted. All of these organic fertilizers are used as soil amendments for our Certified Organic pastures. Since we have been presented with the opportunity to expand our land boundaries, we are more than ever motivated to build this rich soil to help repair those eroded, dead mineral medium soils.

We breed black soldier flies, to consume excess waste. The larvae of these are fed to our poultry.

All of our hides are salted and shipped to a tannery to become leather. Some of our hides are returned back to the farm, where craftsmen hand sew bags, wallets, jewelry, and other artisan goods. We have our own water treatment plant to turn the wash down water into irrigation water for our pastures. In nature there is no waste. We endeavor to operate our abattoirs the same way.

The plant's abattoirs are powered by our 50,000 watt solar voltaic array. We also use solar thermal technology to heat our wash down water.

White Oak Pastures reuses wastewater through irrigation, which is possible using our Land Application Permit monitored through the EPD.

The well-being of our workers is a major priority for us, as well. White Oak Pastures employees work on non-mechanized lines, which is safer and healthier than the rushed, automated assembly lines of high-volume slaughterhouses. The workers on both the kill floor and in the cutting room are artisans, trained in several skills. We also encourage our employees to take home fresh produce from our organic farm to share with their families. We have ten families that have more than one family member working at White Oak Pastures.

White Oak Pastures is the only farm in the United States that has both, a red meat abattoir and poultry abattoir, on the farm and under USDA inspection. We own 1,500 acres and lease about 1,000 acres for hay. White Oak Pastures is the largest pastured poultry producer in the country.