



*Feel Better Farm*  
*Equine and Farm Animal Rescue*

## **Volunteer Handbook**



## Welcome to Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue!

Welcome and thank you for your interest in volunteering at Feel Better Farm!

Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue, located in Esmont, Virginia, is a **501(c)(3) charity** that was established in 2018 by Director Sarah Barwick. We take in all breeds of horses and donkeys and farm animals from law enforcement seizures and private owner surrenders. Our mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and find new loving homes for these deserving animals.

Many people became familiar with Feel Better Farm in November 2020 when Greene County Animal Control seized 131 farm animals, including pigs, sheep, rabbits and various fowl, from a home in Dyke, VA. As one of the more established rescues in the area, Feel Better Farm took in over 100 animals. One of the most familiar faces from that seizure was our wonderful Mama, who is now a healthy and thriving (and spoiled!) permanent resident at Feel Better Farm, along with her 'husband' Moo.



*Moo (left), Mama (right)*

This seizure was a major turning point in terms of 1) public awareness of Feel Better Farm, 2) public awareness of the need for farm animal rescue in Virginia, 3) the number of animals we take in, and 4) increased funding.

Feel Better Farm has helped with other smaller Animal Control seizures, and with private individuals who, due to their age, health, medical or financial issue, or a divorce or death, can no longer care for their animals. We also take in feed lot horses when 'bailed' by another group or individual. We do not fund raise to 'bail' horses. We receive multiple calls weekly asking us to take an animals that they can no longer care for. Whether or not we can help these animals depends entirely on space, volunteer time and funds available to take care of the animals. Every year, the need for Feel Better Farm's services increases.

We operate out of the Barwick's personal farm, which they offer, at no cost to the rescue.

THANK YOU, VOLUNTEERS!!!! We can't do it without you!

**Feel Better Farm's Goals** are to:

1. Increase our Rescue capacity from 24 equines and 30 small farm animals (excluding fowl) in 2020 to 35 equines and 50 small farm animals in 2023 by expanding our foster network and reorganizing the existing property.
2. Re-route out access road to accommodate increased traffic.
3. Increase our outreach to the community, to include school visits, clinics, open houses and seasonal events.
4. Prevent future rescue situations. This includes working with youth and 4H Clubs, teaching respect for animals and proper animal maintenance, and working to build a 'care bank' for local animal owners in need.
5. Serve as a model of best practices for responsible animal rescue, rehabilitation and rehoming, along with responsible land management through green farm development and maintenance.

**Our 2020 operating budget was \$17000.00** Of that, 62% is spent on animal care, 32% on property maintenance, 5% fundraising. Our support comes from individual donors (80%), grants (16%), adoption fees (2%) and in-kind donations (2%). We receive no government funding.

**The FBF Leadership Team:**

**Sarah Barwick, Founder and Executive Director.**

**Ellie Riley, Assistant Director**

**Tini and Luke Bennett, Volunteer Coordination**

**Jason Barwick, Farm Manager**

Feel free to contact any of us with questions and suggestions!

This handbook is an aid to help you have a safe, positive experience at Feel Better Farm. Understanding the rules of Feel Better Farm creates a better, safer environment for you and the residents.

Thank you for your time, dedication and help in caring for our animals!

## **Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue Farm Rules**

- **NO smoking or vaping on the property at any time.**
- **NO alcohol or illegal substances allowed on the property at any time. (Alcohol may be permitted at Feel Better Farm sponsored events.)**
- **NO dogs allowed on the property, unless you have received prior permission from the FBF Leadership team.**
- **Children 17 and under MUST be supervised by an adult at all times. Children under 15 must be accompanied by a parent or designated guardian at all times. All children 17 and under must have a current liability waiver on file that was signed by a parent or legal guardian.**
- **Clean up after your horse and yourself. Put things away where you found them (preferably in their proper location).**
- **No feeding other than approved food without prior permission from the FBF Leadership team.**
- **No hand feeding without prior permission from the FBF Leadership team.**
- **All riders or persons handling an animal or entering a field with animals must sign a liability waiver before riding or handling them in any way.**
- **When riding, long pants, riding boots and an ASTM/SEI approved helmet must be worn.**
- **Animals, especially equines should only be removed from fields with prior direction and/or being accompanied by a member of the FBF Leadership team.**
- **If you wouldn't do it at home... don't do it at the farm. Common sense and courtesy at all times please.**

***Failure to adhere to these rules may result in being asked to leave the property.***

## Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue Visitor Policy

The following categories of people are officially affiliated with Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue. Please note that an individual may fall under one or more categories

- Staff
- FBF Leadership Team
- Board of Directors
- Regular Volunteers
- Vet & Farrier

### **Visitors to Feel Better Farm:**

*Anyone who does not fall into one of the categories above is a visitor.*

1. Make an appointment or discuss with FBF staff or the FBF Leadership team before visit so that appropriate volunteers can be available during the visit.
2. All visitors must check in and sign a release of liability before any visitor can approach any animal. Any visitor 17 years of age or under must have their release of liability signed by a parent or guardian.
3. All visitors must be accompanied by a volunteer or staff while on the property.
4. Visitors/Guests are not allowed to handle animals unless under supervision of FBF staff or the FBF Leadership team.
5. Never enter a stall or field with an animal unless authorized by FBF staff or FBF Leadership team.
6. Persons affiliated with Feel Better Farm wishing to bring visitors should receive prior permission from the FBF Leadership team. They are responsible for their visitors' safety and conduct at all times. They should remain with their guest and ensure that all rules and safety guidelines are followed.
7. Visitors are expected to abide by all Feel Better Farm rules and guidelines. Failure to adhere to these rules may result in being asked to leave the property.

## Facilities and Equipment

- **“The Barn”**

The barn is the main hub of Feel Better Farm.

Although it is a barn and will get messy and dirty, let's try our best to take care of what we have and keep it in good shape.

The barn cats (Barny and Barnabus) live in the barn. They get fed during morning and evening feeds, but volunteers are encouraged to check their water and add food to their pan if needed.

Nothing should be removed from the tack room or blanket room without prior permission or supervision from the FBF Leadership Team.

Cabinets in the feed room are labeled. If you can't find something, just ask. If we don't have something that you think would be useful, let us know.

- **Hay Barn**

This is where all of the (you guessed it) hay is stored.

The back side is where square bales of straw and hay is stored. The front left is for round bales and the front right is for miscellaneous tools and equipment. Hay, although it looks like fun, is not for playing on and can be dangerous, so please don't use it as a jungle gym.

- **Tractor**

FBF has a John Deere and a Massey Ferguson tractor, and some related equipment. The tractor should not be operated without prior training and express permission from the FBF Leadership team. Please note that both tractors run on diesel.

- **Wheelbarrows and Forks**

FBF has several wheelbarrows for moving heavy items and picking up manure.

We also have multiple forks for manure pickup, stored on the outside wall of the feed room.

# Manure Dumping

## ***When to Pick Up***

- Sheep stall – These are deep bedded, which means straw is added to the top daily or as needed, but not removed. The stall is stripped monthly.
- Pig stall in the main barn - The pigs 'bed' should never be removed, just added to. Their toilet area should be picked daily and stripped and rebidged monthly
- Pig barns in the side field – straw should be added as needed
- Stalled horses – should be picked and bedding added to twice a day.
- Every Day – anywhere you see manure, go ahead and pick it up.
- Bi-Weekly – pastures should be dragged if weather allows

**Manure can't be picked up TOO often- if you see it and have time to clean it, go for it!**

## ***What to Use***

- Wheelbarrow
- White 5 gallon buckets
- Tractor bucket

## ***Where to Put it***

- The manure pile between the goat pen and back field. Dump as close to the main pile as possible. The pile will be consolidated and turned with the tractor/bucket.

# Pastures

**ALWAYS CLOSE AND LOCK PASTURE GATES BEHIND YOU!** Don't complicate your visit to Feel Better Farm. Donkeys and horses are very quick and strong. They can escape, even when you are in the field. If this happens to you, stay calm. The first thing to do is close the gates at the end of the road to prevent them from getting to the main road. Get a bucket of food and a halter, plus help from any people available. Then calmly approach the animal. They will usually go to food, other horses or straight to the barn. Just be patient and calm and you'll be able to catch them.

**Moving Animals:** Horses and donkeys should not be moved/removed from their pastures without the request or instructions of the FBF Leadership Team.

**Quarantine:** Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue has a written Quarantine Policy. This policy must be adhered to for the safety and health of all animals in the Rescue. Please see Quarantine Policy later in this handbook.

**Pasture perimeter check:** Please check all fencing around the Field or Paddock when you are visiting or feeding at Feel Better Farm. A deer may have damaged a fence, or a tree has fallen on it. Notify a member of the FBF Leadership team right away so we can keep the animals safe and secure. In case of emergencies where fencing has been damaged and equines could escape, contact the Executive Director immediately for instructions on relocation

**Run-In Sheds:** Run-Ins provide shelter for the animals in all fields except Field 6. Take a look at run-in sheds during your visit. Any broken boards or need for mucking should be reported immediately. If you have time to do the mucking, we thank you!

# Animal Safety

**Safety for humans and animals is of the utmost importance at Feel Better Farm. We never want any human or animal to feel unsafe or be in an unsafe situation. If you ever feel unsafe or unsure when dealing with the animals at FBF, please notify a member of the FBF Leadership team immediately.**

## Approaching an Equine

Always speak to the equine before approaching or touching him and always approach from the front. If the equine is turned away from you, call to it as you approach so you don't startle it. Never approach an equine directly from the rear. Even in a stall, approach from an angle at the rear.

Pet an equine by first placing a hand on its shoulder or neck. The touch should be a rubbing action. Don't "dab" at the end of the nose. Remember that most equines do not like being petted on the face.

If he is tied, get him to look at you. Always notice an equine's expression and ears before advancing. His ears can also show his attitude. Interest is shown by one or both ears turning to catch sounds. One or both ears may point backwards to hear as you work beside or behind him. If he is annoyed, he may threaten with both ears back flat on his neck. This threat is usually accompanied by an aggressive turn of the head.

## Handling

When working around animals, wear boots or hard-toed shoes to protect your feet. Never wear tennis shoes, moccasins or go barefoot.

Always work close to the equine. If you are near his shoulder, you won't be struck with the full force of his feet. Nor will you receive the full force of a kick if you stay close to the body when you work about the haunches or pass behind the equine.

Always let an equine know what you intend to do. When picking up the feet, for example, do not grab the foot hurriedly. This will startle the equine and may cause it to kick. When lifting the foot, touch the shoulder or hindquarter, and then run your hand down the leg. When you get to the fetlock say "up," and squeeze the joint. The equine should pick up his foot for you.

Work about an equine from a position as near the shoulder as possible. Speak to him with a firm and calm voice.

Never stand directly behind an equine or directly in front of him. To work with its tail, stand off to the side, near the point of the buttock, facing to the rear. Grasp the tail and draw it around to you.

Be calm, confident, and collected around equines. A nervous handler can make a nervous equine.

Do not drop grooming tools under foot while grooming. Place them where you will not trip on them and the equine will not step on them. If you do drop something under the equine, move the equine safely out of the way and then retrieve the item.

Don't tease your equine. Teasing may cause it to develop dangerous habits for the rest of its life. Avoid feeding the equine treats from your hand too often.

If an equine misbehaves while you are handling it (i.e. nipping or biting, kicking out, pulling away aggressively), use a firm voice to correct it. Be calm and confident. Correct an equine only at the instant it disobeys. If you wait, even for a minute, it will not understand why it is being punished. Punish without anger, or your punishment may be too severe. Never strike an equine about its head.



## Leading

When leading your equine, walk beside him—not ahead or behind. A position even with the equine's head or halfway between the equine's head and its shoulder is considered safest.

Use a long lead rope and both hands when leading. If the equine rears up, release the hand nearest to the halter so you can stay on the ground.

It is customary to lead from the left (near side), using the right hand to hold the lead, near the halter. The excess portion of the lead should be folded, figure-eight style (never looped around your hand!). When leading, extend your right elbow slightly toward the equine. If the equine makes contact with you, its shoulder will hit your elbow first and move you away from it. Your elbow can also be used in the equine's neck to keep the head and neck straight as well as to prevent the equine from crowding you. An equine should be workable from both sides, even for mounting and dismounting.

***The equine is stronger than you, so don't try to out-pull him.***

Never wrap the lead rope or reins around your hand, wrist, or body. A knot at the end of the lead rope aids in maintaining a secure grip when needed for control. Never drape a lead rope or reins across your shoulders or neck.

Don't wear dangling jewelry around equines. Bracelets and dangling earrings can get caught in reins or lead lines.

Be extremely cautious when leading an equine through a narrow opening, such as a door. Be certain you have firm control and step through first. Step through quickly and get to one side to avoid being crowded.

Use judgment when turning an equine loose. Lead completely through the gate or door, and turn the equine around facing the direction from which you just entered. Then release the lead rope or remove the halter or bridle. Avoid letting an equine bolt away from you when released. Good habits prevent accidents.

Avoid use of excessively long lead ropes so as to prevent you from becoming entangled.

## Quarantine Procedures

**Quarantine:** Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue has a written Quarantine Policy. This policy must be adhered to for the safety and health of all animals in the Rescue.

**All equines entering the Rescue without proper vaccination documentation are quarantined for 21-30 days.**

**Please note the following regarding your interaction with quarantined horses and quarantine pastures/paddocks:**



- Quarantine Signs are posted in the most visible spots in front of Stalls/Paddocks (1 to 2 signs minimum.)
- Volunteers who observe any quarantined animals exhibiting any signs of illness (such as diarrhea, vomiting, sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge etc.) should immediately notify the Executive Director.
- **There may be separate quarantines at Feel Better Farm at one time. Do not interact with two separate quarantines at the same time.**
- NO contact is allowed between quarantined equines and any other equines.
- **When feeding, wear disposable gloves.**
- Keep your interaction with them, including grooming, to the end of the feeding schedule.
- Do not mix halters, lead ropes, buckets, brushes or spray that are used for other horses. **Use feed buckets, brushes, bug spray, washing supplies that are designated for Quarantined animals only.**
- When filling their water, do not let the end of the hose hang in the water.
- During the winter, when breaking ice in troughs, do not use the same implement that you use on the other troughs.
- Do not touch the horses and then touch anything else (this includes the gator!)
- Do not let the horses sniff at your clothing and then go in with other horses.
- Do not take a gator into the Quarantine field.
- **If you stay at Feel Better Farm after feeding, you must wash your hands with disinfectant.**
- After your feeding shift, wash your clothes before interacting with equines again.

A quarantine period is ended **only** by the Executive Director.

If we all follow the same procedures the risk of having a disease problem will be greatly minimized.

## Volunteer Training and Requirements

Volunteers are expected to fulfill shifts and duties that they sign up for and follow all farm rules.

We also recognize that people's lives and circumstances change- if you find that volunteering at FBF doesn't suit your current schedule, please let the FBF Leadership team know as soon as possible.

**FBF Volunteer Contact information- [feelbetterfarm@outlook.com](mailto:feelbetterfarm@outlook.com)**

### Volunteer Requirements

1. Anyone interested in volunteering at FBF must first attend a scheduled Volunteer Orientation. (Other times may be arranged if needed.)

2. Each interested volunteer must complete a Volunteer Info Sheet and Liability Waiver. Volunteers are responsible for updating these forms as needed (i.e. change of emergency contact, address, phone number, medical conditions, etc.).

A calendar of upcoming events will be given to each prospective volunteer at their orientation. Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis at the Volunteer Coordinator's discretion.

**Please note: All volunteers are expected to report any dangerous behavior they observe other volunteers engaging in to the FBF Leadership Team.**

## **Volunteer Forms**

**All volunteers should update their Volunteer Info Sheet and Liability waiver annually. In case of changes such as addresses or emergency contact changes, please update as needed.**

**See samples of these forms here:**

**LIABILITY WAIVER- required for any volunteer or visitor interacting with equines in any way. NO exceptions. Any volunteer or visitor 17 years of age or young must have a current liability waiver signed by a parent or legal guardian.**

Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue  
8902 Langhorne Road  
Esmont, Virginia 22937  
(434) 987-9384  
Feelbetterfarm@outlook.com  
www.feelbetterfarm.org

#### Release of Liability and Waiver of Responsibility

#### PLEASE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING

I accept notice of the provisions of Section 3.1-796 through 3.1-796.133 of the Code of Virginia, which state in part: That there are inherent risks in equine activities, including (I) the propensity of an equine to behave in dangerous ways which may result in injury to the participant: (II) the inability to predict an equine's reaction to sound, movement, objects, persons, or animals: and (III) hazards of surface or subsurface conditions. The waiver shall remain valid unless expressly revoked by the participant or parent or guardian of a minor, in writing, with receipt acknowledged by Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue.

Serious injury may result from participation with and proximity to horses.

Your safety cannot be guaranteed.

The undersigned hereby releases, waives responsibility, discharges and covenants to not sue Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue, its representatives, agents, directors, sponsors or volunteers, jointly or individually, for any loss or claim as a result of personal injury or property damage which might arise from undersigned's participation in any program or activity directly or indirectly involving Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue whether or not upon premises then occupied by Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue

At any time that Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue does not own the premises it occupies but premises are leased or donated, the owner(s) of said premises are incorporated herein and held harmless by this Release and Waiver.

This Release and Waiver includes, but is not limited to, heirs, assigns, personal representatives or others who might seek to claim loss or injury on behalf of the undersigned.

I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE that handling and/or riding of horses is an extremely dangerous activity and that there are numerous obvious and non-obvious inherent risks always present in such activity despite all safety precautions. No horse is a completely safe horse and, if frightened or provoked, may divert from its training and act accordingly to its natural survival instincts which may include, but are not limited to, stopping short, changing direction or speed or both at will, bucking, rearing, biting kicking and/or running from perceived danger.

The undersigned is fully aware of the risks to person and property inherent in entering the premises and in handling or contacting the animals there present. The undersigned, with full knowledge, voluntarily assumes all risks of loss, damage or injury that she/he may sustain while participating in the care, handling, transport and/or riding of any such animal under the aegis of Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue whether or not upon the immediate premises then occupied by Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue

The undersigned acknowledges that Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue, its representatives, agents, directors, sponsors and volunteers have relied upon the foregoing to grant permission to enter the premises and participate in the programs, care and handling of the animals there sheltered.

If undersigned is determined to be in any way detrimental and/or uncooperative with the policies and procedures of Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue then in place for the safety and protection of the animals and other persons present, undersigned may be denied further permission to participate in the activities and programs of Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue, wherever they may occur. Notwithstanding, the foregoing Release of Liability and Waiver of Responsibility shall remain in full force and effect.

Should Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue change its name or relocate at any time, the foregoing shall remain in full force and effect.

Minors, 18 years old or younger, MUST wear protective headgear when riding. This is NOT an option.

I, the undersigned, have read and understand the foregoing agreement, warnings and Release of Liability and Waiver of Responsibility. I further understand and agree that I am assuming all risk attendant to the handling and/or riding of horses. I attest that all facts conveyed to Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue, either verbally or in writing, relating to physical condition, age and experience are correct and are being relied upon as such.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Please print your name here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (if under 18 a parent or guardian must sign)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

IF RELEASE AND WAIVER IS FOR A MINOR (UNDER 18 YEARS OF AGE) A PARENT OR GUARDIAN MUST SIGN IN AGREEMENT.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed name of parent or guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of parent or guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship

\_\_\_\_\_  
Age of minor at time of signing

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date signed

Group or Organization Name (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

- **VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET-** required for any prospective or regular volunteer. Volunteers should ensure their personal info sheet is always up to date, especially with medical conditions and emergency contacts.

# VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SHEET

Name (legal): \_\_\_\_\_

Nickname (if preferred): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt # \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: Month \_\_\_\_\_ Day \_\_\_\_\_

Are you on Facebook? (for event notifications)  YES  NO

Preferred method of contact:  Phone  Text  Email  Snail Mail

## EMERGENCY CONTACT:

In case of an emergency please provide 1-2 contacts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Physician: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies (bees, etc...) \_\_\_\_\_

Serious Medical Issues we should be aware of (diabetes, seizures, etc..)

\_\_\_\_\_



**\* IMPORTANT CONTACT INFO \***

**FBF Leadership:**

- Sarah Barwick, Director- (434) 987-9384
- Jason Barwick, Farm Manager - (434) 989-6752
- Ellie Riley, Assistant Director - (434) 305-8989

**Veterinarians**

**Horses**

- James River Equine, Dr. Jeff Shane – (434) 953-6034

**Small Farm Animals**

- Agrarian Vet, Dr. Lincoln Montgomery – (757) 277-2637

*Please contact leadership before contacting the appropriate veterinarian unless you believe it is a truly urgent emergency (i.e. bleeding profusely, choking, colicking, appears to have a broken bone, animal attack etc).*

**Email Address:**

[Feelbetterfarm@outlook.com](mailto:Feelbetterfarm@outlook.com)

**Volunteer Facebook Page:**

Feel Better Farm Volunteers, Fosters, Adopters and Friends

**Feel Better Farm address- 8902 Langhorne Road, Esmont VA 22937**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HANDBOOK

As a volunteer of Feel Better Farm Equine and Farm Animal Rescue, I acknowledge that I have read this Volunteer Handbook in its entirety and understand the rules and guidelines therein. I agree to follow all rules and guidelines and ensure that any visitors I bring to Feel Better Farm or any FBF event understand and abide by these same rules and guidelines. I understand that if I or my visitors fail to adhere to these rules and guidelines, I/we may be asked to leave the property.

I certify that as a volunteer, I have a current Liability Waiver and Volunteer Information Sheet on file. I agree to keep these documents updated as necessary.

If at any time I have questions or concerns regarding the rules and guidelines, I agree to contact a member of the FBF Leadership team.

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**Printed Name**

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**Signature**

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**Date**

**Initial receipt and acknowledgment of Volunteer Handbook**

**Required annual acknowledgment of Volunteer Handbook**