Ross Farm Museum – Status Report 2025 - Recommendations from Department of Agriculture Farm Animal Welfare (FAW) Team

CATTLE

FAW Inspection Jan 24/25	April 30/25 Follow Up Visit	May 29/25 Follow Up Visit	Current Status
#1 - Ensure constant access to water • All cattle had access to hay during our visit but no access to water. Dairy cattle and working beef cattle (oxen) require a significant amount of water to meet their daily nutrient/lactation requirements, therefore having consistent access to palatable water is an important factor that needs to be considered. Determining ways to provide animals with consistent access to water in this heritage farm setting should be considered.	No water or hay were present. Museum staff are in process of designing water trough system for barn to provide continuous access to drinking. Oxen and cattle were in good body condition and appeared overall healthy. Barn was clean, shavings present in stalls and doors on two sides of the barn were open allowing for adequate air flow. Barn was dark, with minimal natural light.	Oxen did not have access water while in the barn, which was discussed with staff. Automatic waterers will be installed for the oxen within the next two weeks. A local tour was on the property and oxen were being provided hay by the students during the tour. The windows and doors in the barn were opened providing good air quality and a noticeable cross-breeze in the barn with minimal flies. Oxen stalls were maintained, free of built-up manure and bedded with sawdust.	**COMPLETED ✓** Automatic watering system in place. Oxen turned out into paddock with watering systems. **ON-GOING ✓** Water buckets in blacksmith shop to be made available when shoeing oxen
#2 - Ensure Oxen are exercised daily • Ensuring animals receive regular daily exercise and turnout time is important for overall animal health, welfare, and muscle retention. Cattle that are required to work and pull require regular exercise to keep them prepared for working tasks, and to reduce the risk of injuries while under load. • The Code of Practice for Beef Animals recommends providing daily exercise for any cattle that are tethered (Section 1.2).		Two Oxen were observed tied in the livestock barn. Oxen are in good body condition, bright, alert and appear healthy. The oxen hooves have recently been trimmed and new shoeing put on by the farm blacksmith. Staff mentioned the oxen will be used for working demonstrations this season Staff are still in the process of figuring out how to enable the oxen natural outdoor/pasture access and mitigating concerns by staff regarding potential horn damage. Pasture introduction options were	**COMPLETED ✓** The three cows were sold for slaughter in early July as they were no longer useful to the farm. **ON-GOING ✓** Oxen are turned out for 3-4 hours in paddock daily.

		discussed with staff to enable oxen to safely adjust to their new surroundings and prevent horn damage. Regular turn-out time for the oxen when not being worked would be beneficial to their overall health and well-being. The two Canadienne cattle and one Canadienne heifer, Red, Rose and Reba, were located across the on pasture across the road from the barn.	**IN PROGRESS** A livestock specialist has been contracted to support animal care, as well as assist and train new staff. New farm hands have been hired and are currently receiving training.

SHEEP

FAW Inspection Jan 24/25	April 30/25 Follow Up Visit	May 29/25 Follow Up Visit	Current Status
#1 - Ensure constant access to water • Provide sheep with consistent access to fresh, palatable water of sufficient quantities at all times. Water is an essential nutrient and consistent access to palatable water is critical for normal bodily functions as well as thermoregulation. Water consumption volumes vary from animal to animal, breed, sex, size, health, activity level, feed type, dry matter intake and environmental temperatures. In cold temperatures energy requirements increase, therefore dry matter intake increases as does the required volume of water. Feed intake can be reduced if sufficient water is not available. (NFACC, section 3.2)		Automated watering systems have been implemented and put in place for the sheep pastures, which will enable consistent access to water. The new automated watering systems will need to be monitored and cleaned regularly to ensure the water remains clean and palatable for the animals. The sheep shelters were clean with dry bedding provided within the shelters. The sheep have access to grass pasture and hay with grain provided daily. All sheep were bright, alert and displaying normal behaviors during inspections. No	**COMPLETED ✓** Automatic watering system in place. **ON-GOING ✓** System is inspected daily to ensure it's functioning, emptied and sterilized twice weekly during summer.

		concerns for the sheep were noted during inspection.	
#2 - Follow private vet recommendations • Records from former vet clinics should be reviewed to ensure accuracy of previous medical treatments and vaccinations. Ensure parasite program controls level of parasitism while reducing use of deworming drugs. Finally, consider adding selenium shots for lambs and the addition of a chemical supplement to alter urine pH.	Upon inspection, approximately 30 Cotswold sheep were separated into three pastures. Each pasture had a small building that the sheep had access to providing adequate for protection from weather and temperatures. Shelters were unsanitary and wet at time of inspection. Pastures had slight grass growth and hay was present in all feeders. In first pasture, three mature rams were observed. One ram was underconditioned with a body condition score of 2/5 and prominent spine, rib and hip bones. The ram was observed with labored breathing and displayed signs of respiratory distress. The same ram was lame with an obvious gait abnormality. A second ram in the pen had a visible lameness as well. The second pasture, located beside rams, had four adult ewes. One ewe had loose stool with staining covering a large portion of her hind end. Water located in pasture was discolored and looked to be non- palatable. Four ewes appeared in good body condition, bright and alert. The remaining sheep were in third pen. There were approximately 15 ewes and 10 lambs. Ewes and lambs appeared bright, alert and overall healthy. One mature ewe was lame on hind leg. An	Sixteen Cotswold sheep, separated into three different areas on the farm. Rams were located in the paddock beside the pigs. The main flock was located in the large sheep paddock while the ewes and pregnant animals were found in the barn and separated for lambing. This is a significant downsize from previous inspections and follow ups and highlights Ross Farm Museum's goal in downsizing animal numbers to a manageable number. Staff mentioned some of the sheep have been sold to heritage breeders, looking for Cotswold genetics within the province. During the May long weekend, the sheep were shorn, and the required farrier work was completed. The remaining sheep are in good body condition with no evident lameness observed in the flock.	**ON-GOING ✓** Sheep are checked daily at minimum and rotated pastures on a regular schedule. All ewes and lambs were moved to apple orchard pasture. Have been experimenting with moving them for intensive grazing on gated pastures for 3-4 days then moved to new section. Aim is to reduce parasitic re-infestation. Feed and portable watering stations set up in gated pastures. All are cleaned and sterilized regularly.

	automatic waterer with clean, palatable water was present and several animals were observed drinking during inspection. Automatic waterers are in the process of being built for remaining sheep pastures. Hooves on adult sheep appeared unkept and were due for regular hoof maintenance. Fleece on adult rams and ewes are long, and due to be shorn. Ross Farm staff confirmed that sheep will be shorn the long weekend in May and will provide the sheep with a hoof trim during this time.		

PIGS

FAW Inspection Jan 24/25	April 30/25 Follow Up Visit	May 29/25 Follow Up Visit	Current Status
#1 - Provide constant access to water • Provide consistent, free-choice access to water for all pigs and access to water outside of feeding times to meet daily water intake requirements. Free-choice water access is especially important for lactating sows, as water intake requirements increase during lactation and providing adequate access helps ensure nursing piglets are receiving the optimal volume of nutrients from the sow. (NFACC Code of Practice for Pigs, section 2.3)	Two sows and one boar Berkshire pigs were located inside barn. Pigs were separated into individual pens with access to dry bedding. All pigs were in good body condition, appeared bright, alert and overall healthy. Remains of feed were observed in feeding trough. Pigs did not have access to clean, palatable water. Museum staff are working on watering system such as nipples or trough system to provide continuous access.	Three Berkshire pigs, one boar and two sows were observed outside in their pasture located at the Ross Farm Museum. The pigs were displaying normal resting behaviors during inspection. The pigs are in good body condition, appear healthy and generally well. They had access to water, shelter and a natural area within their pasture to wallow. No further concerns were noted for the pigs. Staff mentioned they are still in the process of constructing an automated water system for the	**COMPLETED ✓** Automatic watering system in place.

		pigs, as the pigs have destroyed recent construction ideas.	

POULTRY

FAW Inspection Jan 24/25	April 30/25 Follow Up Visit	May 29/25 Follow Up Visit	Current Status
#1 - Provide constant access to water As per the NFACC Code of Practice for Pullets and Laying Hens access to water in sufficient quantities must be provided at all times, therefore ensuring birds have consistent access to palatable water.	Poultry were located inside coop and were separated into different cages. All birds had access to food, water, dry bedding and roosts. Birds appeared bright, alert, and healthy. Poultry are inside coop due to biosecurity reasons regarding Avian Influenza. Windows in coop provided natural lighting and adequate air ventilation free from the scent of ammonia. The coop was noticeably clean, and no concerns noted.	No concerns were noted for the poultry. Poultry are in good condition, appear healthy, have access to grain, water and shelter. Poultry coop is clean and maintained with more than adequate space for birds. Natural roosts are put in place in the coop for poultry, with the option to enable birds access to outdoor runs.	**ON-GOING ✓** Poultry are checked twice daily, and watering stations rinsed and filled. Sterilized twice weekly.

HORSES

FAW Inspection Jan 24/25	April 30/25 Follow Up Visit	May 29/25 Follow Up Visit	Current Status
#1 - Hoof Care • It is evident that there is a chronic neglect, mismanagement, and improper care for all horses. It is time to invest and establish a relationship with a reputable farrier that is familiar with specialized corrective shoeing methods and techniques. Due to the chronic issues in these animals' hooves, regular shoeing is no longer acceptable as it will likely increase the further deterioration of the hoof structures and corrective shoeing options should be explored	One Canadian stallion and one Clydesdale gelding were turned out in separate paddocks upon inspection. Horses have access to palatable, clean drinking water along with hay contained in nets. Horses were bright, alert and in good body condition. Upon inspection of the barn, stalls were clean with shavings present. Large feed containers were present upon entering the barn that	One Canadian stallion, Clyde, and one Clydesdale gelding, Champion, were outside in the gravel paddocks behind the stable during the time of inspection. Horses were turned-out in individual paddocks, neighboring one another. The horses looked healthier than previous visits with maintained coats, improved condition and	**COMPLETED ✓** Have engaged the services of Emma Thompson, local farrier recommended by the private vet. She visited the horses in July and shod all but the colt.

• While proper care and farrier work will contribute to the welfare of these horses, there are additional changes that can be made immediately. These animals work everyday, walking and moving over uneven ground and over a variety of substrates. It is time to consider full days of rest for the animals to allow their feet to have rest. • Bedding or the addition of rubber mats will also help take pressure off the feet.	contained several different types of grain.	muscling, and maintained hooves. During this follow up inspection, there was significant changes to the horse stable. The horse stable now contains four large box stalls with no straight stalls noted. A double-wide box stall has been specifically designed to provide more than adequate space for the mare (Bonnie) and foal. The horse barn was clean, bedded with sawdust and maintained.	**COMPLETED ✓** Bedding issue has been resolved. **IN PROGRESS** None of the horses are currently working pending the hiring of a teamster.
#2 - Outdoor Exercise • While the animals are worked and exercised daily, greater care should be given to outdoor time. As mentioned above in relation to hoof care, animals should be provided with regular turnout time that allows them to express normal horse behaviours. Not only will this help with their rest and rehabilitation from hard work, but the outdoor turnout can also help be an environmental management strategy to reduce the effects of respiratory illnesses. • It is recommended to avoid using the turn out pens behind the horse barn as the gravel and rocks can be detrimental to the soles of the animals' feet. • The daily turnout will also have significant positive advantages to the overall mental wellbeing of the animal. Time to just be a horse.		Additional outdoor paddocks (2) have been put in place since previous inspection. The four turn-out paddocks are constructed with aluminum gates and crushed rock, lacking access to shelter. Staff mentioned they are in the process of constructing a plan to enable the horses to have access to shelter while in the paddocks. We recognize that these outdoor paddocks are not intended/used for 24/7 turnout, therefore consideration around turn-out during peak sun/extreme heat temperatures were discussed with staff to elevate heat-stress concerns.	**COMPLETED ✓** Sunscreens have been installed on all horse paddocks and there is natural shade in the pastures. Self-watering stations available in most pastures, those that do not have local tapped water source with large water container that is filled daily and sterilized weekly.

			ON-GOING ✓ Currently being turned out to pasture and paddock for 4 hours + daily.
#3 - Nutrition • After reviewing the vet records and looking at the body condition scores of the animals, it is evident the feeding regimes need professional input. All animals are overweight or verging on obese. Each has been told to have less energy and carbs in their diet while increasing their mineral intake. • The pregnant Mare – Bonnie – was placed in a tough position at the start of her pregnancy by not being given Selenium and Vitamin E potentially increasing the changes of complications after foaling. • As per staff, the horses were fed a diet of Dairy Cow Sweet Feed containing Rumensin / Monensin. Rumensin is a feed additive for dairy cattle and is highly toxic to horses resulting the heart damage and potentially leading to sudden death or chronic heart failure. • Bring in a professional nutritionist to balance the feed, mineral intake, and address the body condition scores of the animals.		Each horse had access to a full hay bag, and two buckets of clean water. Automatic watering systems have been installed and are accessible in each horse stall. The feeding room for the horses has been redesigned, with labelled feed component containers prepared for more complex horse diets. Staff mentioned they are currently in the process of constructing and completing fencing for the horses to have access to grass pastures. The grass pastures are lush and will utilize natural shelter to protect the animals from adverse wind and warm temperatures. Water lines are already in place to provide adequate access to water on pasture. Timeline for fencing was discussed and agreed fencing will be completed, prior to several horses returning to the property.	**COMPLETED ✓** Following recommended feeding program provided by private vet. Maximizing pasture use for all animals.

#4 - Daily Health Checks • Basic daily health checks could have prevented some of the chronic conditions some of the animals are currently experiencing. Checking for signs of disease, distress or pain needs to be a top priority moving forward as to not compromise the animals any further. • Daily checks must address the entire animal. The amount of smegma found in the sheaths of all the male horses leads me to question the actual care going into the animals as the task of cleaning sheaths is a basic and routine task.			**ON-GOING ✓** Daily check lists for all animal categories are being filled, reviewed and archived in vet room. Sheaths on male horses being cleaned monthly Concerns over animal health are noted and if assessed urgent, vet is called to assess.

Summary Remarks & Recommendations – FAW Team

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For a Heritage Farm, I was impressed with the work done with the animals. All animals were clean, alert and seemed to be content – a wonderful reflection to the hard work and commitment of the staff working with the animals everyday. For the livestock workers, their use of modern technology, such as apps, to input feedings, treatments, and communicate with other staff is an excellent way to ensure the day-to-day chores and treatments are performed. Having electricity in the livestock barns is also beneficial as it is used to help with the piglets and other young animals stay warm under the heat lamps. I encourage consideration of automatic waterers or water	#1 – Water • Staff continue to work on and make progress in building automatic waterers for all animals. #2 - Outdoor Exercise / Turnout • While the animals are worked and exercised daily, greater care should be given to outdoor time. As mentioned in previous report	After the initial visit to the site on January 24, 2025, the staff of Ross Farm Museum and Nova Scotia Government Department of Community, Culture, Tourism and Heritage, have made improving the welfare of the animals at Ross Farm Museum a priority. Recommendations from the initial inspection and follow	**COMPLETED ✓** More knowledgeable staff have been hired to oversee animal care. Paddock shelters have been erected.

bowl heaters to control ice build-up and allow consistent access to water. These could be removed from public view on days that the farm is open to visits from the public. All animals, including horses, had their annual vaccines, check ups, fecal floats and teeth floated. Reviewing the files on the horses has led to frustration and confusion. Of the five Canadian Horses owned by the Ross Farm Museum, as part of Nova Scotia Museum (the Province of Nova Scotia), all but one has significant health concerns impacting their quality of life. It is evident that deficiencies in husbandry practices and environmental concerns have negatively impacted the welfare of these animals and led to chronic health conditions. Whether it is the malformation of hooves causing pain while working, the potential exposure to fatal feed additives, the lack of knowledge to properly prepare a pregnant mare for a foaling, or the lack of effort put into the males and cleaning their sheaths, it is essential to address husbandry practices and stop their neglect. Below are observations based solely on the horses' lameness and structural problems in their hooves and does not include the effects that PPID, EGUS, Equine Metabolic Syndrome, and respiratory concerns may have on their workload and future. Firstly, the treatment and rehabilitation of the animals with structural damages opens an ethical question that needs to be answered. While I do not doubt the abilities of the person rehabilitating Willy and Kate, there is confusion as to why the animals needed to be moved off site. The injuries diagnosed in both have primary treatment plans of stall rest, time, and turnout. Are there specific reasons why these steps could not be done on the site of the Ross Farm? Secondly, the structural damages to Kate and Willy are severe and will negatively affect their quality of life for the rest of their lifetime. The question needs to be asked what will the animals be like in a year's time when their rehabilitation is complete? Will they be pain free and able to work? Or should they be turned out full time and retired? Thirdly, it is my understanding that more horses were moved off site for "respiratory reasons". Most equine respiratory issues can be	in relation to hoof care, animals should be provided with regular turnout time that allows them to express normal behaviours. Not only will this help with their rest and rehabilitation from hard work, but the outdoor turnout can also help be an environmental management strategy to reduce the effects of respiratory illnesses and muscles tying up. • It is recommended to avoid using the turn out pens behind the horse barn as the gravel and rocks can be detrimental to the soles of the animals' feet. • Paddock rotation will increase grass quantities for grazing and help in the reduction of parasite load in sheep #3 - Professional Services • As stated in initial report, it is important for the farm to continue their established relationship with private veterinarian and consider a nutritionist to review and advise on animals' diets. The Farm Animal Welfare team appreciates being involved with the review of the Ross Farm Museum husbandry and management practices. We are impressed with the continued work to improve the welfare of all animals.	up have been met. The improvements to the site and the health of the animals on property exceed the standards outlined in the Animal Protection Act. The Farm Animal Welfare team approves the return of three horses (Maverick, Bonnie, and foal) to the Ross Farm Museum with the following conditions: • Maverick is retired indefinitely. • No horses will be worked for the 2025 season. • In 2026, the horses are to have a full assessment by the Farm Animal Welfare team and private veterinarian before returning to an appropriate workload. • The animals will continue to have regular vet and farrier work performed. • The Farm Animal Welfare team will continue to perform unannounced inspections as part of the follow-up. The date of return for Maverick, Bonnie and foal are continued to be discussed. Although scrutiny from the media and public has picked up over the weeks, it does not reflect the work and progress that has	Pasture fencing has been completed. Maverick, Bonnie and the Foal have been returned to the farm on June 10th. As per recommendations they are not being worked for the 2025 season. Willy and Kate were surrendered to the Department of Agriculture and have been re-homed. Farrier was in on June 26th and 27th to work on the horses. A vet visit for horses was on June 12th, two days after their return to the farm. Most recent horse check was July 29th to reassess condition and feeding needs. Last farm visit was on July 8th, to examine the poultry, pigs and oxen. Most recent visit was on July 18th regarding

managed through fresh air, turnout, minimizing dust and ammonia levels. Medical therapies, antibiotics, puffers, and steroids can be prescribed, and all of these can be provided and administered on the Ross Farm. For some animals, transport can be an extremely stressful event. Having at least four animals moved and transported for basic care is concerning and raises the question of the risk benefit thought process. Caution must be taken with any horses showing respiratory signs, including fluid from their airway, as these could be signs of Strangles. Finally, a serious conversation regarding the future of the horses needs to be held among all parties and with consideration of whether some of these animals need to be replaced rather than rehabilitated. Currently, three of the five Canadians should not be in work with the fourth being pregnant and expecting in early April. While this review and report have documented some major concerns regarding animal welfare, I want to reiterate to front line staff that their commitment to their work is commendable and does not go unnoticed. Upon visiting the farm, all the animals were content and appeared healthy. Be it a source of pride that you are managing a Heritage Farm in the era of technological advancement, and you are managing it well above expectations. While I appreciate the importance of clean tack and heritage bloodlines, it seems the focus has shifted and needs to move back to basic husbandry and putting the welfare of the animals first.		been made over the last four months. All associated staff should be proud of their work. The Farm Animal Welfare team appreciates being involved with the review of the Ross Farm Museum husbandry and management practices. We remain committed in helping the Ross Farm Museum meet its goals in improving welfare practices.	the lamb suffering from flystrike. Did follow-up phone consultations with vet on issue till July 23rd. **IN PROGRESS** Assembling records and record keeping system for each of the animals.

Prepared by Rodney Chaisson, Acting Director, Nova Scotia Museum, with input from Marc Tassé, Executive Director, Ross Farm Museum.