

ROSS FARM MUSEUM – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Animal Care & Welfare

Q: How does Ross Farm ensure animals are well cared for?

A: Animal care has been strengthened through new routines, upgraded facilities and scheduled veterinary visits. The Department of Agriculture and the Nova Scotia Museum worked with Ross Farm staff and board members to undertake significant improvements to the farm's animal care procedures in 2025. These include:

- Regular veterinary assessments to monitor health
- Improved housing and pastures that meet updated standards
- Clear daily routines for feeding, grooming and exercise
- Improved record keeping
- Training for board and staff to ensure consistent care

Ross Farm is committed to meeting or exceeding modern animal welfare standards while continuing to interpret traditional farm life for visitors.

Q: Were the horses removed or rescued from Ross Farm?

A: Concerns about the horses' health were first raised by staff in late 2024 and shared with the board. On the advice of a veterinarian, the horses were temporarily moved to a boarding facility for further assessment. The move was voluntary and carried out by Ross Farm.

One horse, Clyde the stallion, was considered to be in good health and remained at the farm. The other horses stayed at the boarding facility until the horse program could be reviewed and strengthened.

Following veterinary checks and clearance from the Department of Agriculture, three of the horses returned to Ross Farm on June 12, 2025. They are healthy and doing well. The other two horses were turned over to the Department of Agriculture.

Q: Does Ross Farm sell cows and other animals?

A: Ross Farm is an active farm, and part of responsible farming is “destocking” — reducing animal numbers when necessary. This may involve selling animals to other farmers or selling them for meat when they are no longer productive. The proceeds are used to reinvest in the livestock program at the farm.

The animals at Ross Farm are here to help visitors understand how essential livestock were to daily life on a 19th-century farm. Historically, oxen and horses provided labour for hauling and transport. Sheep supplied wool and food. Cows were kept for milk, butter, and beef. Chickens produced eggs and meat, and pigs consumed farm waste and provided pork.

Unlike large-scale commercial farms, 19th-century farmers maintained a close relationship with each of their animals. At Ross Farm, the animals are individually cared for, allowed to graze openly, and treated in a way that reflects the historic bond between farmer and livestock.

Q: Why don't visitors always see all the animals at the farm?

A: As on any farm, animals rotate between pastures, barns and rest areas. Sometimes they are indoors for veterinary care, training or feeding. This rotation keeps them healthy and ensures they are not overexposed to crowds or weather. Even if you don't see every animal during your visit, they are being well cared for.

Q: What happens to Ross Farm animals in the winter?

A: During the winter months, the museum is open to the public on weekends. The animals remain on site seven days per week. They are housed in warm barns, receive daily care from staff, and continue to be monitored by veterinarians. Winter is also a time for planning, training and preparing for the next visitor season.

Heritage & Education

Q: What makes Ross Farm different from other museums?

A: Ross Farm Museum is a “living history” site — visitors don’t just look at displays, they experience farm life as it was lived in 19th-century Nova Scotia. Staff dress in period clothing, animals work the land and heritage skills like blacksmithing, spinning and bread-baking are practised daily. As part of the Nova Scotia Museum system, Ross Farm connects past and present in a way that few places can, offering an authentic glimpse into rural life more than 150 years ago.

Q: Why does Ross Farm keep animals at all?

A: Animals were central to life on a 19th-century farm. They provided food, clothing, labour and companionship. At Ross Farm, livestock help visitors understand how people once lived and worked in rural Nova Scotia. For example:

- Oxen and horses hauled logs, ploughed fields and moved goods
- Sheep provided wool for clothing
- Cows supplied milk, butter and beef
- Chickens produced eggs and meat
- Pigs consumed farm scraps and provided pork

By caring for and working with animals today, Ross Farm preserves a living link to Nova Scotia’s farming heritage.

Q: Is Ross Farm a petting zoo?

A: No. Ross Farm is a working heritage farm and a provincial museum site. While visitors may sometimes have close encounters with animals — such as watching oxen work or seeing sheep sheared — the focus is on education and historical interpretation, not entertainment. The animals are here to demonstrate farming practices of the 1800s, not to be handled freely.

Operations & Oversight

Q: Who runs Ross Farm Museum?

A: Ross Farm Museum is a part of the Nova Scotia Museum. The New Ross District Museum Society manages daily operations under a licence agreement with the Province. The Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage provides funding, oversight and standards, while the Society and its staff manage programs, animals and visitor experiences. It is a partnership between government and community.

Q: How is Ross Farm funded?

A: Ross Farm receives annual operating support from the Province of Nova Scotia through the Nova Scotia Museum system. This is supplemented by revenue from admissions, memberships, programs, special events and the gift shop, along with donations and community fundraising. Together, this funding supports animal care, heritage programming, staff and site maintenance.

Q: What changes are being made at Ross Farm?

A: In 2025, Ross Farm began a series of improvements to strengthen animal care and enhance the visitor experience. These include:

- Upgrading barns, fencing and pastures
- Updating animal care routines and staff training
- Restructuring the horse program for long-term sustainability
- Expanding programming that connects visitors with Nova Scotia's agricultural past

A new executive director, who began in April 2025, is overseeing these improvements in collaboration with the Society board, veterinarians and the Province.

Visitor Experience

Q: What events take place at Ross Farm Museum?

A: Ross Farm hosts events year-round that bring history to life — from seasonal celebrations and family-friendly activities to demonstrations of traditional skills and farming practices. You can find details on upcoming programs and special events on the [Events Calendar](#).