

# Ayrshire Farm

## **BACKGROUNDER: AYRSHIRE FARM**

### **19<sup>th</sup> CENTURY SUSTAINABILITY MADE PROFITABLE IN THE 21<sup>st</sup>**

Historic Ayrshire Farm covers approximately 800 acres of land in Upperville, Virginia. A national working model for humane sustainable farming, Ayrshire Farm combines 21st century technology with traditional farming practices. The first farm in Virginia to meet both Certified Humane and Certified Organic standards, Ayrshire's mission is to preserve genetically viable herds of rare and endangered breeds of livestock and heirloom-variety crop production to both self-sufficiency and profitability. Producing on a limited commercial scale, Ayrshire Farm is nationally acclaimed for concern for quality in its production processes of its extraordinary premium products and the unparalleled taste of its meats and produce.

This traditional, labor-intensive approach to farming produces high-quality meat and produce that is sustainably raised, providing consumers the best in taste and quality, while protecting breeds that would otherwise be lost. This controlled, hands-on approach not only ensures quality control but safety as well.

Ayrshire Farm's mission is to farm humanely, sustainably and profitably, promoting the benefits of locally produced, humanely raised meats and organic produce to the consumer, our community, and our children through education, outreach and example.

### **HISTORY:**

Purchased in 1996 by entrepreneur Sandy Lerner, Ayrshire Farm was first settled in the 1800s as a dairy farm. The existing fieldstone manor house, one of the first steel-reinforced residences of its time, was built in 1912 and is constructed of naturally insect-resistant cypress wood. Originally designed to use electricity, indoor plumbing and central heating, the manor house was the pinnacle of modern living when it was constructed.

Despite having suffered from age and neglect, today the manor house is fully restored and used as a venue for charitable and social events. Authenticity pervades every corner of the main residence which has been decorated with care and a determination to preserve the practicality of the past. Historical yet functional, the manor house is very much representative of the owner's philosophy of the advocacy and incorporation of the past into the present.

### **FARMING TODAY:**

Ayrshire Farm's mandate is to bridge the gap between traditional food production methods of the past and the future. Before the inception of chemical-based agribusiness, small family farms and American rural communities prospered. This locally based food system benefited everyone: farmers were able to support themselves and their families, and consumers had access to affordable, wholesome, high-quality food. Today, only 1% of all public and private monies spent on agricultural research are focused on the development of sustainable agriculture methods, Ayrshire Farm's founder, much like progressive landowners of the past, is committed to taking on the responsibility of advancing new farming practices, even if that means rediscovering methodologies developed before the advent of chemical agriculture and the vertical monopolization of agriculture in the latter half of the Twentieth Century. To those at Ayrshire Farm, this is the only viable, long-term option to save our land, health, jobs, food, self-sufficiency, food-security and rural economic health.

Ayrshire Farm's commitment to responsible farming includes a dedication to raising heritage breeds. These animals are slow to mature, but their disease resistance is high. They can thrive on grass and their natural behaviors, such as mothering and reproductive responses are still instinctive. Additionally, heritage breeds are known for the high-quality and diverse flavors of their meats.

Ayrshire Farm is a Certified Humane Raised and Handled® operation, meaning that Ayrshire's livestock have been raised and treated based on high standards of humane care. The Certified Humane Raised and Handled® program is an independent certification and labeling program that is the only animal welfare label requiring the humane treatment of farm animals, from birth through slaughter. These standards ensure that animals have ample space, shelter and gentle handling to minimize stress; constant access to fresh water, space in which to engage in natural behaviors and a healthy diet of appropriate food, without sub-therapeutic antibiotics and synthetic hormones; and the use of cages, crates and tie stalls are prohibited.

Lerner and her team at Ayrshire Farm are actively and vocally working to rebuild the regional agricultural infrastructure, helping other small farms find the solutions that they need to be economically self-sustaining. At Ayrshire, modern knowledge of science, biology and advanced husbandry techniques are combined with contemporary processes, such as USDA-inspected food safety, that go far beyond the legal requirements. Ayrshire Farm has been providing completely traceable meat products from farm to consumers since 2005, establishing Ayrshire Farm as a technologically advanced and socially responsible farm. This emphasis on traceability, in conjunction with heritage breeding, composting, highly structured grazing and humane, organic livestock husbandry are at the forefront of tomorrow's sustainable farming practices.

In 2002, Ayrshire Farm received the federal designation of "USDA Certified Organic" which, among other requirements and restrictions, means that no synthetic chemicals may be used, including herbicides, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, synthetic additives, or genetically modified seeds or plants. Because it does not intensively rear its livestock, Ayrshire Farm does not have the same need for antibiotics and synthetic hormones that Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (factory farms) have. Furthermore, Ayrshire's "USDA Organic" and "Certified Humane" designations prohibit the use of both non-therapeutic antibiotics and synthetic hormones. The farm's organic turpentine/flaxseed oil cattle de-worming method, intensive-rotational-sequential multi-species grazing systems and scientifically managed compost and animal waste facilities are exemplary.

Ayrshire Farm also holds the distinction of being the first farm in the U.S. to receive its Certified Humane designation for its veal program.

The farm provides meat and produce to some of the top restaurants and chefs in the Washington, D.C. region including its own restaurant, Hunter's Head Tavern, as well as Ayrshire Farm Catering Company. Hunter's Head Tavern, located in Upperville, Virginia, was the first restaurant in the U.S., to receive its Certified USDA Organic and Certified Humane" distinction.

Meat products and produce are also for sale at Ayrshire's Home Farm Store (first store in the U.S. to receive Certified Organic and Certified Humane designations) and online. Ayrshire Farm brands also include pet food through its line "The Furry Foodie" featuring healthy human-grade raw food diets for dogs and cats.

For more information on Ayrshire Farm, visit [www.AyrshireFarm.com](http://www.AyrshireFarm.com).