

Volunteer Work

Friskeröd farm — now also extended to include the farm Surtung and the forthcoming Surtungs naturvårdsstiftelse (Surtung Nature Conservation Foundation) — has always been rooted in volunteer work and non-profit contributions. It takes dedicated souls, of all species, to respond to such a dream. And to put it into practice. In the everyday, repeated work.

Voluntary work means giving of yourself to something greater. Something whose immediate results you may never get to experience. It is not personal reward that provides the motivation, but the act of giving itself. By contributing time, interest, engagement, generosity, and physical effort, you become part of an empathic coexistence. It is in the everyday that deep, philosophical insights sometimes arrive as invaluable glimpses. But it is also here that we are challenged, on every conceivable level. It is in everyday relationships that we are truly given the opportunity for self-reflection. Empathic coexistence can never be based on the idea of personal, isolated gain. And for that very reason, volunteer work becomes the very hub of the wheel that sustains and stewards these places. Those of us who live, exist, and work here do not receive any financial compensation for the care of the farms and their inhabitants. The ability to welcome animals who need rehoming for various reasons is based on donations, such as hay-sponsorship contributions. Courses and external work are run within the framework of a sole proprietorship. Donations, hay-sponsorship contributions, and volunteer work are managed by the non-profit association Friends of Mio — which is currently in the process of transitioning into a foundation. The foundation's purpose is to ensure the stewardship of animals and nature from an empathic and holistic perspective, where every individual is respected as self-owning, regardless of species.

At Friskeröd (with its associated leasehold at Ödsmål), there are winter paddocks for horses and cows, as well as year-round housing for sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, pigs, guinea pigs, dogs, and cats. At Surtung, there are grazing pastures for horses during the period April to December, as well as year-round housing for chickens and cats. In time, there will also be space for rabbits at Surtung. There are also outlying lands in the form of hills, wetlands, forest, and parts of the lake Långevattnet — a mosaic of different nature types, with widely varying wishes and needs. Both farms also have gardens.

At Friskeröd, there is the little green house, with two guest rooms, available as accommodation for volunteer workers. This is also where the private residence of the Emelie Cajsdotter family is located. At Surtung, there is a larger main house, where the rental of rooms and beds forms the basis for operating costs and investments on the farm. In addition to the larger house, which can accommodate up to 15 beds and more if needed, there is a smaller cottage that works well as summer accommodation. There is also a cabin further up the hillside, approximately a 45-minute walk from the farm. All accommodation is shared in some form, with communal toilets and kitchens. As a resident, you are responsible for cleaning your own sleeping area/room, as well as communal spaces. The care we are always striving to achieve in our relationship with animals, plants, and all other living beings — including fellow humans — applies equally to the place as a whole.

We are always in need of help. There is always something to contribute. We also know that there is a great willingness to participate, to lend a hand, and in doing so to become part of a larger community. That is why the opportunity to volunteer exists, for shorter or longer periods.

What kind of help is needed, and what tasks are there?

What we always need most is help with the daily routines. Such as supplementary feeding of horses with special needs, feeding all species, mucking out, cleaning, care and welfare, assistance with hoof trimming. Repairing and building fences, fixing loafing sheds and other buildings. Cleaning, clearing, washing, and in some cases painting — both indoors and outdoors. As well as various forms of gardening.

What is required of a volunteer?

A joy of work, and a willingness to get stuck in and participate in what needs to be done. With around 200 animals of various species, many unpredictable situations arise, some more demanding than others. The ability to be flexible, and to receive and follow specific instructions, is fundamental. As is great attentiveness and a passionate interest in empathic presence with all conceivable species — including other people.

We do not accept any form of correction, punishment, or other degrading actions in the treatment of any living being. The individuals who live here, regardless of species, do not exist to satisfy human wishes or needs. It is extremely important to arrive with an open mind, without preconceived ideas about what you expect to receive. The focus must be on what you are prepared to give. And you must be prepared to take part in the tasks that are necessary, and where the need for help is greatest. Even though each individual contributes unique knowledge and abilities, and carries out all tasks according to their own capacity, you must also be prepared to challenge your limits and participate in the situations that arise. You do not need to be exceptionally strong and fit, even though most of the work is physical in some form. But you need to have a great willingness and desire to give yourself fully to the task.

A driving licence is a great advantage, as the horses — especially in summer — are kept in many different pastures across a larger geographical area. A car is available on site.

What is included, what do you receive, and what is expected of a volunteer?

The basic arrangement is 4–6 hours of work per day, in exchange for food and accommodation. If you stay for full weeks, one day is entirely free. How these hours are structured and what the tasks involve is adapted individually and according to what is happening.

Regarding food, breakfast, lunch, and dinner are included. You cook the meals yourself, as we are not able to cater to a variety of diets, allergies, etc. in any other way. Snacks and other extras are at your own expense. You are responsible for your own toiletries and bed linen.

Private consultations with individual animals, treatments, and tuition — such as riding lessons — are not included, but can be booked separately if time and space allow.

For every new volunteer, there is a trial period of up to 14 days. After that, we evaluate together what a potential continuation might look like.

Voluntary work can never be about an expectation of what you will receive in return. No particular experiences can be promised. But the more time you spend with all these individuals, the more

encounters arise. And with them come opportunities for healing, insights, new learning, and inspiration. That is where the true reward lies. It may not always be apparent in the moment, when you are in the midst of what is happening. But seen from a broader perspective, perhaps a deeper change is taking place — and what you receive in return sometimes comes in unexpected ways. You should be prepared for the possibility that nothing may remain quite the same, and at times the challenges will be demanding. But also unforgettable and invaluable, if you choose to see it that way.

Interested in volunteering?

If you are interested in volunteering, please get in touch by email at ecajsdotter@yahoo.com. Describe a little about yourself, your previous experiences, and what draws you to this particular place.

Welcome to become part of this adventure, and the realisation of the dream of empathic coexistence across species boundaries!