



Sanctuary Operations Manager Dean Farm Trust

Location: Dean Farm Trust Sanctuary, near Chepstow

Reports to: Director / Trustees

Responsible for: Sanctuary operations, a small team of animal carers and an established volunteer team

About the Role

Dean Farm Trust is seeking an experienced Sanctuary Operations Manager to take overall responsibility for the effective day-to-day and longer-term operation of our 32-acre Sanctuary and the home for life we provide to 200 rescued residents.

This is a broad, hands-on operational leadership role covering animal welfare oversight, facilities and site management, land and pasture, volunteers, budgets, compliance, projects and forward planning. The postholder will lead a small team of animal carers and work closely with our established volunteer team, providing clear direction, building accountability and creating a positive, well-organised working environment. Working with the Director and Trustees, they will keep the needs of our residents at the centre of every decision.

Key Responsibilities

Leadership, Recruitment and Team Management

- Provide visible, confident and supportive leadership to the small animal-care team and established volunteer team, setting clear priorities, standards and expectations.
- Take responsibility for workforce planning and recruitment, ensuring the Sanctuary has the right skills, experience and operational cover to meet residents' needs.
- Lead the recruitment, induction, training and ongoing development of animal carers, ensuring new team members are properly supported and equipped for their roles.
- Manage, support and develop the team through regular communication, supervision, feedback and performance reviews, addressing capability, conduct, attendance or wellbeing concerns appropriately and in conjunction with the Director and external HR support where required.
- Delegate effectively, maintain accountability and build a positive working culture in which people communicate well, take responsibility and work together across the Sanctuary.
- Ensure rotas, responsibilities and working arrangements provide safe and effective operational coverage while making responsible use of staffing resources.

Sanctuary Operations and Animal Welfare

- Take ownership of Sanctuary operations, ensuring work is well planned, properly resourced and delivered to a consistently high standard.
- Maintain management oversight of animal welfare and standards of care, ensuring appropriate systems, facilities and resources are in place for residents' current and changing needs.

- Coordinate operational planning for veterinary care, emergencies, disease-control measures and agreed new rescues, working with the care team and relevant professionals.
- Translate the charity's strategy and priorities into practical annual and longer-term operational plans, with clear actions, responsibilities and reporting.

Facilities, Site and Project Management

- Lead the management and development of the Sanctuary's buildings, barns, animal accommodation, fencing, tracks, utilities, vehicles, equipment and other infrastructure.
- Establish planned and preventative maintenance programmes, prioritising work according to welfare, safety, operational need and available budget.
- Manage contractors, suppliers and site projects from scoping and quotations through to safe completion, quality checks and financial control.
- Ensure the site is safe, secure, well maintained and prepared for seasonal pressures, severe weather, emergencies and business continuity needs.

Land and Pasture Management

- Develop and oversee a practical management plan for the Sanctuary's 32 acres, including grazing rotation, field resting, forage and hay requirements and seasonal land use.

Volunteers, Visits and Events

- Lead and develop our established volunteer team through effective recruitment, induction, training, communication, support and retention.
- Create clear, meaningful volunteer roles that safely support animal care, maintenance, gardening, visits, events, administration and specialist projects.
- Plan and oversee well-managed corporate volunteer days that provide practical benefit to the Sanctuary and build longer-term relationships with participating organisations.
- Oversee the safe and professional operational delivery of private tours, open days, visitor activities and Sanctuary events, ensuring appropriate planning, staffing, facilities and risk controls are in place.

Resources, Budgets and Compliance

- Prepare and manage Sanctuary operational budgets, monitor expenditure and forecast future animal care, maintenance, land, equipment and infrastructure needs.
- Ensure resources are procured and used responsibly, with suitable stock control, supplier management and value for money.
- Maintain oversight of health and safety, operational risk, safeguarding, biosecurity and relevant animal welfare, environmental and site legislation.
- Ensure policies, procedures, risk assessments, records, inspections and incident-reporting systems are current, understood and followed by everyone working on site.
- Provide clear operational reports to the Director and Trustees, highlighting performance, costs, risks, emerging needs and progress against plans.

Wider Charity Support

- Work collaboratively with fundraising, communications and administration, providing accurate operational information for appeals, grants, events and supporter communications.

Person Specification

Essential

- Significant experience in operational, site or facilities management, including responsibility for budgets, risk and delivery across a complex working environment.
- Proven leadership and team-management experience, with the ability to inspire confidence, set direction, make sound decisions and take full ownership of operational delivery.
- Demonstrable experience of recruiting, inducting, developing and performance-managing a small team with clarity, consistency and fairness.
- The ability to build trust, accountability, good communication and a positive working culture while addressing difficult issues when required.
- Experience of leading, developing and retaining volunteers and making effective use of their skills and experience.
- Practical experience of facilities maintenance, contractors, suppliers and project delivery.
- A sound understanding of land or pasture management, or demonstrable experience managing a rural, agricultural or comparable outdoor site.
- Good knowledge of health and safety, risk assessment, compliance and operational procedures.
- Experience of budget preparation, cost control, forecasting and responsible resource management.
- The ability to balance immediate operational demands with longer-term planning and sustainability.
- Clear and confident communication skills, with the ability to build effective relationships with volunteers, colleagues, contractors and external partners.
- Experience of planning and safely delivering visits, events, corporate volunteer days or comparable activities involving members of the public or external groups.
- A genuine commitment to animal welfare and full alignment with Dean Farm Trust's values and vegan ethos.

Desirable

- Experience within an animal sanctuary, animal welfare charity, farm, estate or similar setting.
- Knowledge of relevant animal welfare, biosecurity, environmental or rural land-management requirements.
- Experience of corporate volunteering, partnership development or grant-funded projects.
- Relevant qualification in facilities management, health and safety, land management, animal welfare or project management.

Induction and Training

Dean Farm Trust provides a structured induction covering our residents, species-specific welfare and husbandry practices, biosecurity arrangements, policies and procedures. The successful candidate will be expected to develop and demonstrate competency in these areas during their induction and probationary period.

Employment Details

Contract: Permanent

Salary: £38,000-£42,000 per annum, dependent on experience

Hours: 37.5 hours per week, full-time

Working pattern: Predominantly Monday to Friday, including approximately one weekend in four, with working days adjusted accordingly

Annual leave: 25 days per annum plus bank holidays

Pension: Workplace pension scheme

Probationary period: Six months

Location: Dean Farm Trust Sanctuary, near Chepstow

Driving: A full UK driving licence is essential due to the rural location and operational nature of the role.

Travel: Due to the rural location of the Sanctuary, applicants must be able to travel to and from the site reliably.

Right to work: Applicants must have the right to work in the UK.

Flexibility will be required around emergencies, severe weather, new rescues, events and other significant operational needs.