

# After farm days are over, animals retire to island

By **NIKKI WILEY** The Brunswick News – published Monday, February 25, 2013

ST. SIMONS ISLAND — At the end of a long, winding dirt road shaded by moss-covered trees on the north end of St. Simons Island is a place where animals go to retire.

Yes, that's right — retire.

The Farm at Oatland North is home to retired farm animals, as well as laid-back domestic pets, such as cats and dogs.

It's a family passion, said Natalie Murrah, former shelter director of the Humane Society of South Coastal Georgia, whose family owns the farm.

"I guess we're just sensitive about the plight of animals. We love them," she said. "It's all kind of hard to explain. We just love them."

The farm has grown to include 18 horses and a number of other types of animals.

An animal couldn't ask for more. Goats run playfully around a stable, horses relax in the shade, and cows take in the warm island air.

Some were purchased from neglectful owners. Others were found by officers with Glynn County Animal Services who contacted the farm.

All are being rehabilitated in an easy-going, hassle-free environment.

A brown mustang named Lightning was found in Waynesville inside a small barbed-wire fenced-in area with no food or water.

"Animals are in trouble, and somebody's got to care for them," Murrah said.

The farm is at near capacity since the Great Recession, which left some farmers and pet owners unable to care for their animals.

"A lot of people couldn't afford their animals," said Bascom Murrah, Natalie Murrah's father, who lives on the farm.

The cost of caring for the animals at the farm, which recently became a nonprofit organization, is paid mostly from personal finances. The costs can add up.

"Mother Nature never sleeps," Bascom Murrah said.

The farm has little room to take in new animals, but it hopes to grow its programs. That means animals in retirement might have just one more light duty job to do.

Bascom Murrah says he hopes to get a program going for special-needs children that would involve the farm's retired denizens.

It's a space some children have already come to love.

"We're definitely not a petting zoo, but we definitely try to teach children how to interact with animals," Natalie Murrah said.