



## Jennifer Osborn, artist and farmer joins NFU-O Council

When you find out that All Sorts Acres Farm and Gallery offers sheep products like kefir, cheese, and gelato along with original artworks, handmade wool products, and elderberry inks, then it's no surprise when owner, Jennifer Osborn, refers to her farm as a: "living art instillation."

All Sorts Acres Farm and Gallery, now a 50-acre regenerative farm in Grey County, started in the early 2000's as a small art-farm plan by Jennifer and her partner, Tim. What began in their front yard slowly expanded as they added acreage, new plants, and sheep. Thanks to her "insatiable curiosity", tenacity, and love for experimenting, Jennifer worked hard to bring her vision to life. She uses her skills as an artist as well as her formal education in animal husbandry to harnesses the sweet spot of beauty and functionality on the farm.

As a young girl, Jennifer always loved to draw animals. She went to school for scientific illustration but quickly became dissatisfied, because rather than being in situ measuring and drawing things, she was drawing from pictures of things. So, she switched to animal husbandry, discovered permaculture, and continued art as a hobby. Presently, it is clear how art serves her well as a

farmer. Jennifer says that her art practice taught her how to "fail well." "Messing up a canvas is pretty low stakes," she said, "so I got used to it." And her advice to farmers? Learn how to fail.

"Don't be afraid to fail," encourages Jennifer, "because if you do, it's not really failing, it's just data." This is important, because the way Jennifer takes concepts and contextualizes them for her farm depends on experimentation, and thus, willingness to fail. Jennifer says she uses her failures as a guidance, and because every farm has a different climate, ecosystem, and soil capacity, farmers must observe, be patient, and be willing to try new things.

The sheep at All Sorts Acres Farm and Gallery are a great example of this. Jennifer has learned a lot about different breeds through trial and error, because she only gets one shot at lambing each year. Despite the slow learning process, she is innovative with her discoveries. Most of the wool their sheep produce is unsuitable for fine fibres and clothing so Jennifer and Tim are discovering semi-industrial uses for their stronger, coarser wool. One of their ideas is to produce wool garden felt, which would be naturally breathable and could act as a slow-release fertilizer.

Their new carding mill means they can continue to experiment and work on tying the ends of the near circular loop on their farm.

It is no doubt that all of her experience will serve the NFU-O council well. Jennifer says, "It's exciting to see people still really interested in starting their own farm." The NFU-O council welcomes Jennifer on board as a National Board Member, and certain that All Sorts Acres Farm and Gallery ethos: "Inspired by nature, informed by agriculture, educated by experience" weaves well with NFU-O's policies and mission.

### Local News/Events

**Local 340 (Waterloo/Wellington):** Join Local 340 for a film screening under the stars! Local President, Caitlin Hall (Reroot Farm) invites you to her farm in Harriston on Saturday, September 10 at 7:00 p.m. to meet with fellow farmers and food lovers and watch a farm-related documentary screened on the side of the newly-restored heritage barn. All are welcome for an enjoyable evening! Contact us with any questions at [nfu.local340@gmail.com](mailto:nfu.local340@gmail.com).

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