

LONG-NECKED LIVESTOCK

Meet N.C.'s biggest birds at Perkins Family Ostrich Farm



ALEX TRICE | Photographer
The farm started with only three birds, but now has nearly 100 ostriches. They are raised for eggs, meat and feathers.



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A baby ostrich at the Perkins Family Ostrich Farm races to catch up with the flock.

Alex Trice
Multimedia Editor

With red stripes painted on his neck to identify him, Rufus stands out from the rest of the flock. The bird's demeanor is so friendly that the owner of the farm Rufus lives on was considering selling him to a petting zoo.

Instead, 5-year-old Rufus is now kept as a family pet.

What started with just three birds — two females and one male, all bought near Wilmington about 20 years ago — has now become a successful ostrich farm with nearly 100 birds.

Just 30 minutes from Elon, right outside the small town of Reidsville in Rockingham County, is the Perkins Family Ostrich Farm.

The birds are raised for their eggs, meat and feathers. Either whole eggs or just the shells are sold, and the meat is sold as steak, burgers, liver, neck bones, ground ostrich and "smoked ostrich sticks."

J.R. Harris, a farmer who works on the Perkins farm, said what makes raising ostriches different from raising other livestock is they are "less trouble" to take care of.

"You don't need as many people to keep them fed," Harris said. "If you've got cows, you've got to constantly put feed in the silo."

As for ostriches, he said, "You've just got to dump a bucket of pellets in the feed trough, and that's it."

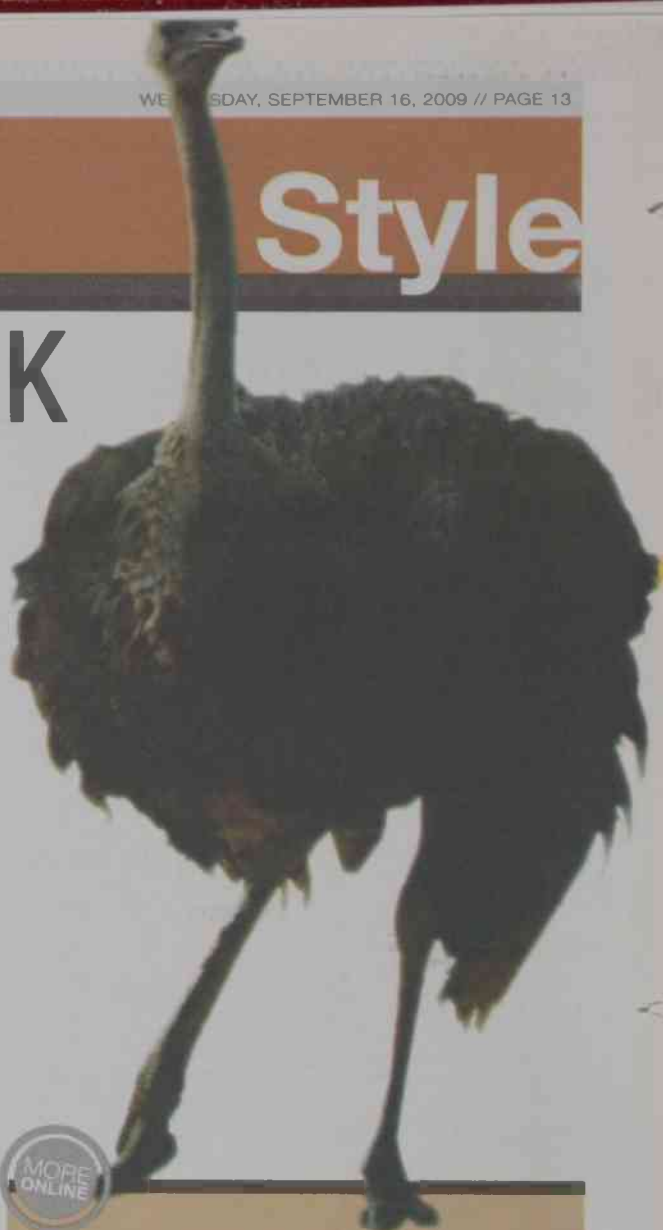
A visit to feed, pet and even ride the ostriches at the Perkins Family Ostrich Farm is free of charge. Because of its close vicinity to the university, Harris said the farm is used to getting visits from Elon students.

"We had some Elon guys come here," he said. "They (were) having a party and wanted to buy some bales of hay. And they decided they wanted to ride the ostriches."

According to Harris, one student went about three feet on the ostrich before falling off.

Other students who have visited the farm include sophomore Holly Taylor.

"I was looking for things to do around Elon, and I heard about the ostrich farm," Taylor said. "I was interested in seeing an ostrich farm because I didn't know they had those around here. The baby ostriches were just adorable, and I didn't expect them to look so cute, but they did ... It was an exciting experience."



OSTRICH FACTS

Ostriches are part of the ratite family, a set of flightless birds that include the emu and Kiwi.

Livestock ostriches are typically slaughtered at 12-14 months, but the wild birds can live to be 80 years old.

Ostriches come in three breeds: redneck, bluenneck and African black.

Adult ostriches have the most efficient immune system on earth.

One ostrich egg will feed 13 people.

INFORMATION COURTESY OF THE NORTH CAROLINA OSTRICH BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

Take a shot: Shooting range owner talks safety, gun rights

Margeaux Corby
News Editor

Mike Hinshaw sorts through customer receipts and invoices on a glass counter of revolvers and pistols. Handgun owners and renters repeatedly open fire only feet away from his elbow. Hinshaw's own shiny Sig 45 semi-automatic is holstered on his belt.

As the owner and operator, along with wife Carolyn, of Handgunners, Inc., an indoor shooting range and firearms training facility in Southern Alamance County, Hinshaw said he owns one of the most dangerous businesses.

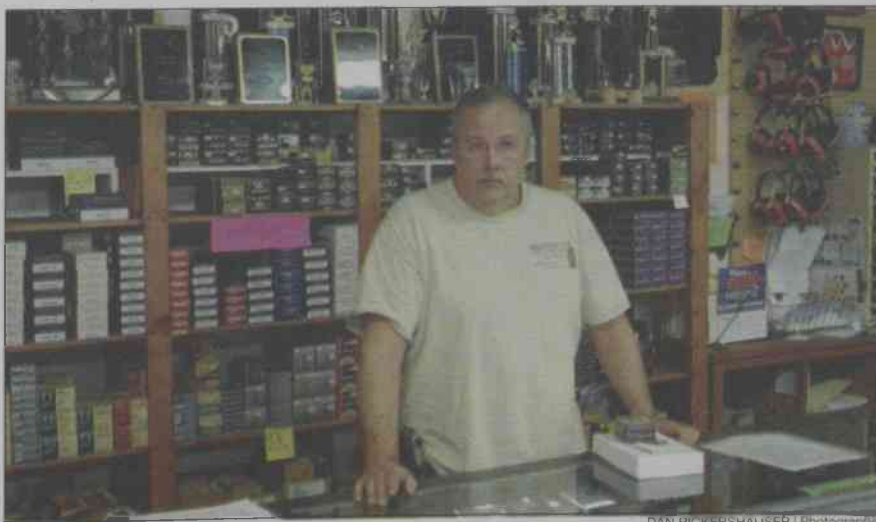
"We are constantly having to remind people not to shoot at us and point the gun in a safe direction," Hinshaw said.

As the president of the company, owner of the facility and a competitive shooting champion, Hinshaw is passionate about guns but even more so about safety.

Anyone visiting the range or attending one of their many training classes must ring a doorbell to be let in to the electrically-locked facility, and several surveillance cameras are trained on them while they wait for entrance. People wishing to step on the firing line and unload a magazine of bullets at the targets are required to have previous firearm experience.

"We're not just clinking tin cans with 22s out here," Hinshaw said. "We're the real deal."

The extent of someone's experience can be ascertained by the application they must submit, Hinshaw said, where they might be asked to draw a sight picture or explain the correct way to load a revolver.



DAN RICKERSHAUSER | Photographer
Mike Hinshaw, owner of Handgunners, Inc., offers training classes to ensure firearms safety.

"It's not too hard to tell when someone is pretty incompetent," he said.

While Hinshaw admits some might see these precautions as overzealous, he is adamant about handgun safety and steps that should be taken to ensure those carrying a weapon are authorized and able to use it correctly.

"I'm a big proponent of Second Amendment rights, but I think we've come to a point in our country and society that we are going to have to come up with certification," he said. "To retain our gun rights, we are going to have to take a step toward handgun safety."

North Carolina does not require a permit for the purchase of a rifle or shotgun. Those wishing to purchase a

handgun must apply with the sheriff of the county in which they wish to purchase the firearm.

Hinshaw has an endless supply of stories about accidental shooting deaths, many of which he uses to supplement the beginner and advanced training classes he teaches.

Hinshaw continually emphasizes the absolute necessity of understanding the power of a gun.

Handgunners, Inc. offers a basic handgun safety and shooting class for novice adults, 21 years and older. Participants in the daylong class are taught the correct shooting stance, the proper use of sights and how to control their trigger pull.

"We get it so a person can use a firearm safely and could defend

WANT TO GO?

Hours:
Sunday and Monday: closed
Tuesday- Thursday:
11 a.m. – 7 p.m.
Friday and Saturday:
11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Location:
4325 South N.C. 49
Burlington, N.C. 27215

CALIBERS ALLOWED ON THE RANGE

Handguns: 22 LR through 44 Mag.
Rifles: shooting straight wall pistol cartridges including 30 caliber carbine.
Shotguns: 410 Ga – 12 Ga. No Copper rifle slugs allowed.
No High Power Rifle or Black Powder Firearms.

themselves at home that night with a revolver," he said.

For those with necessary experience, or after taking one of the range's classes, Handgunners, Inc. has several firearms to peruse and possibly purchase, as well as targets, holster grips and gun cleaning equipment.

"We have a showcase here full of rental guns where a student can try one gun versus another," Hinshaw said.

For more information about Handgunners, Inc. training classes, firing range rates and merchandise, visit: www.handgunners.com.