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NFL STAR WILL WITHERSPOON'S SHIRE GATE FARM EARNS ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED SEAL

Alexandria, VA—Shire Gate Farm of Owensville, Missouri, owned by Tennessee Titan middle linebacker Will Witherspoon, has earned the Animal Welfare Approved seal. Animal Welfare Approved certification is an assurance to consumers that the cattle at Shire Gate Farm have been treated according to the highest welfare standards. Witherspoon raises 100% grassfed White Park cattle on his 500-acre farm.

Witherspoon, who played college ball at the University of Georgia, has been playing in the NFL since 2002, when he was drafted in the third round by the Carolina Panthers. In 2006, he signed with the St. Louis Rams, where he was named Team MVP in 2007. He played the 2009 season for the Philadelphia Eagles before being signed by the Tennessee Titans in March of 2010.

The quiet and somewhat solitary lifestyle of farming can seem at odds with Witherspoon's day job of being a linebacker, a position where the job description is, basically, put yourself in the path of a really big and powerful player while he tries to run right through you. However, it's the transition from the thunderous, bone-crushing ferocity of football to the lush green peace of Shire Gate Farm that Witherspoon values. Shire Gate Farm is not just a business—it's also a getaway for Witherspoon, his wife Rebecca and daughters Layne, Maya and Shaye. "Shire Gate is a total escape for us. It's a place where my daughters and I can work with the animals and the land. I use the companionship of the animals and the beauty of the land to refocus myself after the demands of playing football. Shire Gate is our retreat from the world."

Witherspoon purchased Shire Gate Farm in 2007 as a home for his Shire horses, Rocky and Simon. As the farm expanded to include more horses, Witherspoon decided to turn Shire Gate into a working farm and added cattle. Intensive research led him to White Park cattle. He chose White Parks because they are docile, thrive in a grassfed environment and provide superior milk and meat. His research also led him to AWA and pasture-based farming. "I wanted Shire Gate Farm to be true to nature and true to the way things should be done," Witherspoon says. "That means putting the welfare and care of the animals first."

As a professional athlete in a highly physical and competitive sport, Witherspoon is especially aware of the health benefits of grassfed, high-welfare farming. "I want my kids, and all kids, to grow up in a way that is more in touch with the natural environment. My cattle are raised as nature intended, on grass,

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and aren't fed growth hormones, antibiotics or other unnatural additives," he says. "As a pro football player, I can't take over-the-counter cold medicine without letting my trainer know about it. Why would I want my kids eating beef from cattle fed hormones or antibiotics?" Shire Gate Farm is dual certified by Animal Welfare Approved and the American Grassfed Association (AGA).

Raising his cattle according to AWA standards is how animal-lover Witherspoon shows his commitment to animal welfare on his farm. "AWA and I see eye-to-eye on how cattle should be raised. The great thing about the program is that it offers a wealth of information and provides access to people who can help me raise my herd and build my farm. There's no way I can go wrong. We're planning to expand to poultry, pork, and perhaps even lamb, and AWA has standards for each of these species. I know that AWA and AGA will work alongside me as Shire Gate grows."

Animal Welfare Approved Program Director Andrew Gunther praises Witherspoon's dedication to raising his animals with high-welfare standards. "When I visited Shire Gate with [American Grassfed Association President] Patricia Whisnant, it was clear he brings to his farm the same intense attention to detail and preparation he brings to the football field." In addition to Witherspoon and his wife and daughters, his father, a former military officer, also resides at Shire Gate Farm. According to Gunther, "It was clear this is not just an infatuation for Will, but a real working family farm that will grow and prosper."

Ferocious on the field, Witherspoon is equally ferocious about the welfare of his animals. "When I decided to bring cattle and other animals on the farm, I jumped in quite readily and I decided if I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it right. AWA and AGA are helping me achieve that goal."

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Animal Welfare Approved audits and certifies family farms that raise their animals with the highest animal welfare standards, outdoors, on pasture or range. The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has lauded these standards for two years running as being the most stringent when compared to other third-party certification programs. Visit www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org for a searchable database of approved farms and restaurants, shops and markets where AWA farmers' products are sold. Choose the one independent food label that means healthy, safe, environmentally responsible and humanely raised.