

# Farm Presentations

## Vikum Farm - Drug Abuse

*A safe living and working environment for one or two drug/alcohol abusers in rehabilitation.*



### Farm facts

Location: municipality of Gaular, Sogn og Fjordane County  
Arable farmland: 8 ha  
Rough grazing land: 65 ha  
Crops: Fodder (grass)  
Livestock: 60 winter-fed sheep  
Other animals: hens, horses, dogs, cats  
Housing facilities (for user): Separate house with bedroom, living room, kitchenette, bathroom with a toilet and shower.

### Contact information

Zandra and Kurt Vikum  
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## Objectives

After having stayed at Vikum, users shall be able to live on their own, avoid relapse and thus have a better quality of life.

The services are intended for persons with drug/alcohol problems in need of more intensive care than can be provided by policlinical treatment. Users at the Vikum Farm stay in a safe, drug- and alcohol-free environment, with a structured daily rhythm.

## A brief history

Zandra and Kurt started working on the establishment of their services in 1999. Kurt has worked as a milieu therapist at a youth centre, and has 20 years of experience as a support person.

”We’ve been thinking about this for years, but things didn’t get going until we read a bit about ‘Green Care’”, Zandra explains. Their programme was developed in cooperation with local health and welfare workers. Kurt says that it was very important to communicate well with his own municipal authorities and the drug abuse consultants. These were, and still are important partners. Their green care services began in August 2000.

## Available services

Users participate in all work related to the farm’s sheep husbandry and forestry activities. Work varies with the seasons, and can include:

- Feeding and taking care of animals
- Lambing
- Sheep herding
- Gathering the sheep in the fall
- Shearing
- Forest work
- Building maintenance

## Recreation

There are lots of things to do for the users in their leisure time, such as hiking, fishing, hunting or skiing. Indoor activities are available in the nearby village.

## Housing

Users have their own house at their disposal. The house has a bedroom, living room, kitchenette, bathroom with a toilet and shower. A PC and a TV are also available. Housing is based on self-catering – thus strengthening the users’ ability to be responsible for their own lives.



## Organisation

Users live and are under supervision at Vikum full-time. Zandra and Kurt are accessible 24 hours a day. There is usually only one user on the farm at a time, but having several users together has also worked well.

The duration of the stay varies, from several weeks to several years. This depends on how the stay at Vikum is integrated with other treatment. Some users come to Vikum prior to moving to other institutions, whereas others come as part of a post-treatment programme. Most users stay at Vikum during their entire treatment period.

It is important to clarify the responsibilities and roles of the farmers and the users. An agreement is made for each user, in cooperation with the municipal primary and secondary services. Users shall be under continuous observation of the health and welfare system. The treatment scheme must be outlined in a contract, which is to be signed by the user and the provider of the service.

The contract must contain detailed information about:

- Design and duration of the stay
- Working hours
- Work description
- Improvement of the users drug/alcohol problem
- Use of medicines
- Timing of therapy
- Visits
- Leave of absence
- Leisure time
- Consequences of relapse during the stay

An agreement is also to be made between Vikum and the buyer of the service, i.e., the state. The services can also be provided for users from other counties.

Zandra and Kurt are self-employed, and charge a daily rate in those periods when they have users on the farm.

## Quality assurance

The service is based on cooperation between psychiatric clinic, the user's social welfare office and Vikum Farm. Admission is based on a written application sent to the farm by the welfare office of the user's place of residence. The drug abuse consultant is also involved, and decides on which patients to prioritise.

The drug abuse consultants approve the treatment programme at Vikum, and are responsible for quality assurance. The head physician of the psychiatric clinic, however, is generally responsible for the treatment.

Zandra and Kurt also receive support from the local psychiatric nurse.

## Results

The providers of the services at Vikum have only received positive feedback from their users and the drug abuse authorities. Users appreciate working with animals and the close contact with nature. The main challenge for many users is the period after having completed the stay at Vikum. Some have a relapse, and thus have a much longer road ahead of them to overcome their drug abuse.



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