

Tessa M. Hallford, PhD

Lab Manager / AFS II

Tessa M. Hallford was born at home, in the small town of Dothan, Alabama. When Tessa was five years old, she either wanted to become a teacher or a veterinarian due to her love of children and animals. Throughout her childhood Tessa would collect random animals and bring them home, much to her mother's dismay. At the age of sixteen, Tessa was employed in teaching children from the ages of three to five, preparing them for kindergarten, as well as working at the local mall, while attending high school. Tessa began college courses at the local junior college in 2001; however, the terrorist attack of 9-11 compelled Tessa to join the U.S. Navy, where she enlisted for five years. After time served and an honorable discharge, she obtained an associate's degree with emphasis in psychology from Blackhawk Junior College. Tessa continued her education and received a bachelor's degree in biology from Northern Illinois University, where she was an undergraduate research assistant to Dr. Bethia King. After graduation in 2012, Tessa moved to Florida to be closer to family and stumbled upon the University of Florida, North Florida Research and Education Center in Marianna, where she was hired as a temporary laboratory assistant by Dr. Nicolas DiLorenzo. As a result of her temporary hire, Tessa was invited to apply for the permanent position of biological scientist and lab manager and then encouraged to further her education. Tessa completed a MS (2017) and a PhD (2023) at the University of Florida under the advisement of Dr. Nicolas DiLorenzo. Her research focused on the novel crop, *Brassica carinata*, and its potential use as a protein supplement in beef cattle. Tessa is happily married, and a full-time mom to two wonderful, not-so-little boys, and a miniature dachshund.