

Application for the Alachua County Small Farmer Grant

Grant Due 5 PM June 28, 2024

Name of Applicant:	Shannon Fedenko and Jeffrey Fedenko
Email:	FEDENKOFARMS@GMAIL.COM
Phone Number:	(954) 445-3219
Address of Farm/Small Producer Operation. Please include the parcel number.	4943 NW 156 th Ave Gainesville, FL 32653 05820-005-000
Total Funding Requested (request may not exceed \$5,000):	\$5,000
My operation's total Gross Cash Income per year is between \$1,000 and \$250,000 YES AND (Please select one below) Between \$1,000 and \$75,000.	
The owner and operator of the farm has not received the Small Farmer Grant in the past two years Yes, I have not received the grant in the last 2 years	
The owner and operator of the farm/small producer operation is a black, women, indigenous, and or persons-of-color. Yes, 50% owned and operated by a woman (wife & husband)	
The owner and operator of the farm is a first-time applicant OR has not received a Small Farmer Grant award in the past two years. Yes, first-time applicant	
If awarded the funding will only be used to purchase equipment or other capital investments that enhance the economic productivity of my operation. Yes	

Explain what equipment is needed, its cost, how it will be utilized, and economic return to your operations.

If you have taken the Extension Office's Agricultural Entrepreneurial Series, please attach your Farm Plan. (5 bonus points)

We have taken the UF-IFAS Ag Entrepreneurship and Farm Business Planning 2024 course. The farm business plan is attached.

We are requesting \$5,000 in grant funding to help support purchase of a cattle maternity/calving pen and corral (1 pen at \$5,500 and 6 panels at \$119 each) to improve animal welfare and early calf survival, delivering \$3,450 per year additional economic return to our operation.

Narrative for Viability Priority

How will the grant maximize or contribute to the farm's overall business plan and grow the farm's profitability or avoid costs?

Grant funds will be used to reduce cow and calf losses in delivery and early post-partum by providing a safe, secure area for:

- (i) assisting cows with difficult/abnormal labor,
- (ii) monitoring and assisting young calves in distress, and
- (iii) enabling nursing when required.

In 2024 two cows required assistance during or immediately post-calving, and three calves were lost due to significant early stressors, challenging labor, or rejection/insufficient lactation. However, we currently lack appropriate care facilities to assist in labor and provide suitable assistance and monitoring of at-risk calves. **This grant will substantially contribute to our business plan core value of maximizing animal welfare while also increasing profitability through:**

- (i) decreasing cow losses, and
- (ii) increasing revenue from marketable calves.

What are the estimated financial returns?

Estimated financial returns from this investment are approximately \$3,450 per year from additional marketable calves not lost in delivery or early post-partum. This is based on our 2024 losses (3 calves), 2023 average sale weight of 460 lbs per calf, and at a conservative estimate of \$2.50/lb based on the current Ocala and Columbia livestock market USDA price reports.

What specifically will be purchased with the grant funds?

We are requesting \$5,000 in grant funding. Grant funds will be used to help purchase a maternity pen (1 at \$5,500) and corral panels (6 at \$119.99, total cost \$719.94), with a total estimated project cost of \$6,219.94.



I certify that I am an Alachua County resident, have an agricultural exemption, and that all information in this grant application is true and correct. I understand that any errors, misrepresentations, or omissions in this application may result in the application not being considered, points reduced, or if discovered after the award, that the grant funds may be reimbursed to Alachua County.

Business Plan

Three Oak Farms
4943 NW 156th Avenue
Gainesville, FL 32653

June, 2024

Executive Summary

Three Oak Farms, nestled in North Central Florida, is dedicated to establishing a resilient and diversified cow-calf operation under the stewardship of Shannon and Jeff Fedenko. Our 35-acre farm embodies our core values of animal welfare, sustainable practices, and community engagement.

Since our founding, we have focused on enhancing infrastructure and operational efficiency, including significant investments in cattle handling equipment, fencing, and winter forage production. Our immediate goal is achieving profitability through herd management and selective breeding strategies, supported by data-driven insights and guidance from veterinary professionals and agricultural educational sources.

As active contributors to the local agricultural landscape, we currently market calves through auctions in Ocala and Lake City, with future plans to explore direct sales at farmers markets. Our commitment extends beyond profitability to include ecological stewardship, with initiatives aimed at wetland management, pasture improvement, and pollinator habitat enhancement. With a foundation of self-funded investments and strategic growth plans, Three Oak Farms is poised to sustainably expand while enriching our community and preserving our natural resources for generations to come.

Mission Statement

Three Oak Farms is a diversified crop and livestock operation that prioritizes animal welfare, uses science to inform decisions and improve operations, and is committed to the land it's built on. Our mission for the farm is to provide financial support for our family, but more importantly serve as a symbol of hard work and values for our children.

Values

Personal: At the core of our operations is a commitment to animal welfare and comfort, prioritizing their well-being through dedicated veterinary care. Leveraging education and ongoing research to optimize farm practices underscores our continuous improvement mindset. We strive to maintain a positive and enjoyable atmosphere alongside stringent safety measures to ensure a productive and sustainable operation.

Economic: We're first-generation farmers, striving to build lasting value and security for the future. Our financial goals are to generate sufficient income to invest in additional land and equipment improvements. We want to strategically diversify our product portfolio to build resilience, sustainability, and growth.

Environment: Respect for the land is a cornerstone of our farming ethos, guiding sustainable land management practices. We are committed to maintaining pollinator-friendly environments, promoting conservation, and adhering to regulations for wetlands and water systems. We care about the appearance of our farm, knowing that a beautiful landscape brings us joy and is attractive to the community.

Community: Beyond business, our farm actively contributes to the community. We aim to support fellow farmers through collaboration and assistance to create a network of mutual support. We strive to be a dependable neighbor who offers help when needed, with commitments to honesty, dependability, and positive community impact.

Farm History

In June 2021, we bought our farm from Larry Rogers, a third-generation farmer who still owns much of the surrounding acreage. Historically, the property had been used primarily for cattle grazing with some bean and melon crops. We decided to begin our farm by continuing the cattle operation. By late July 2021 we had patched most of the exterior barbed wire and purchased our herd (17 bred heifers). In September 2021 Fedenko Farms filed as an LLC. Since then, our farm has focused on establishing our cow-calf operation.

For our cow-calf operation, our core emphasis has been on animal welfare. Over time, we've made incremental improvements to the land, operations, and profitability. Our sales strategy for this operation is selling calves to auction with additional revenue from

breeding services for a neighbor's herd. To drive cost savings and potentially provide additional revenue we are also producing our own hay starting in 2024.

Our goal since purchasing the land was to one day live on it. We began building our house in 2021 and moved in November 2023. We're raising our two children on the farm and take great pride in our responsibilities to our land, community, animals, and children. We continue to work alongside our neighbors Mr. Rogers and his son, learning from their wealth of experience and assisting each other when needed.

Current Situation

Things are going well for our business. For our cattle operation, we're making improvements to our calving outcomes as we've learned about the performance of individuals over the three years. We have plans for long-term strategies such as dividing the property for rotational grazing, building storage for winter feed options, building shade structures, and possibly incorporating legumes and cover crops.

To be successful in the short term we should focus on improving calf survival particularly for bottle-fed and calves from difficult births. Also, being in the first few years of establishing the herd, we need to continue to select the makeup of our "permanent" herd. We will select cows to keep on the quantifiable measures of health, calving success, and behavior, to establish the best long-term potential for the business and herd.

Vision

Our vision is to establish a reliable cow-calf operation that becomes diversified in operations over time. We will build and maintain infrastructure that contributes to quality of life and value of our animals. We will use educational resources (e.g., UF Beef Short Course, IFAS publications, IFAS Agricultural Entrepreneurship courses, academic publications, USDA resources) to innovate, sustain, and build a farm business that aligns with our values. We will stay resilient through difficult years and re-invest earnings in plentiful years so that we can build a farm that contributes for generations.

Goals

Our goal is to get the cow-calf operation at a steady and cash-positive state. We want to gather data on our cows and design the long-term herd on the basis of behavior and quantifiable measures. We will slowly incorporate equipment and facilities improvements that result in safer and more effective animal handling. We've invested in improved working areas, mineral feeders, feed bunks, water troughs and fencing. Planned improvements include adding shade structures, scratch posts, concrete slabs near water

troughs, and additional fence and working pen improvements. We will use best practices for the herd and calves with guidance from UF veterinarians and researchers.

Over time, we want to incorporate winter management practices to reduce expenditures. For example, this year we are growing pearl millet on a neighbor's field that will generate enough hay for winter feeding. In later years we'd like to explore silos or bunkers for grains and exploratory feed supplements (e.g., brewery biproducts).

We will continue to improve the land. We will work with governing bodies to manage the wetlands in the pasture, improve forage conditions through weed management, and facilitate pollinator habitats through strategic foliage planting.

Marketing

Marketing for the cow-calf operation is minimal. Almost all revenue is generated from market sales of calves, where calf condition, weight, and health make the greatest impact on revenue.

Distribution

For the cow-calf operation, there is little-to-no distribution. We sell at the Ocala and Lake City auctions.

Over time, we may consider direct-market beef sales channels. To do so will require additional business planning, including the addition of insurance, relationships with a slaughterhouse, marketing, and possibly cold storage. In this case, we could sell beef at farmers markets with the distinguishing niche of being family-farmed, grass fed, with humane handling. However, because of other work commitments from the two owners, sales via auction is the most practical route currently.

Products

Cow-calf operation: calves that are vaccinated, castrated, tagged, and dewormed. Our calves are sired by a 100% registered black angus to a commercial mixed herd.

We also receive marginal revenue from stud fees.

Competition

Cow-calf operation: other cow-calf operations in the county and north central Florida region.

Human Resources

Three Oak Farms is run by a husband-wife team. Shannon has a PhD in Biomedical Engineering and B.S. in Agricultural and Biological Engineering, with research experience in impacts of cattle operations on water quality. She also has substantial veterinary experience with domestic, exotic and livestock species. She grew up raising chickens and has a deep love for cows. Jeff has a PhD in agronomy with experience in forage, oilseed and horticultural crops. He currently works with dairy and hay producers across the US on bioenergy projects.

The operations of the farm are balanced. Partners complete tasks as time allows in balance with other commitments. Shannon takes primary responsibility for day-to-day record keeping and accounting, marketing and brand management. Jeff takes primary responsibility for product delivery and market research. Both participate in field and veterinary work.

Operations

We’re committed to making improvements to our operations. Because we are not full-time farming, we’ve focused on one or two key areas of improvement each year.

	<i>Focus</i>	<i>Activities</i>
2021	Start	Purchased land and first herd
2022	Getting set up	Purchased bull; establish relationship with veterinary partners; winter overseeding (rye over Bahia); construct pole barn
2023	Gathering data, improving conditions in winter	Purchased additional heifers from UF (4); attended UF Beef Short-course; purchased a cattle scale; purchased concrete feed troughs; built mineral feeder; attempted first bottle fed calf rescue
2024	Improving calf survival and weight gain; growing winter hay	Calf rescue for neighbor’s calves (surrogate nursing and bottle feeding); collected birth weights of new calves; attended UF Beef Short-course; adopted unwanted calf; purchased new chute for veterinary work; first use of implants for improving calf weight gain

Pasture

Our farm is ~35 acres, divided into (1) a main pasture of ~32 acres, (2) a Northeast pasture of ~1.5 acres, and (3) our home on ~1.5 acres. The main pasture has access to a lane that leads into the veterinary working area (owned by our neighbor). Cattle have free access to the main pasture for a majority of the year. The NE pasture is used as needed to separate sick, injured, or at-risk animals; calf bottle feeding and care; separating the bull from the herd; and as a means to load individuals into trailers for transportation. When possible, we also use the NE pasture as an area to help deliver calves during birth complications. In these cases, we use temporary corral panels to contain the birthing mother.

Our well is located next to our house and feeds two nearby water troughs. We store farm equipment under the pole barn in the main pasture.

To expand into a cross-fenced, rotation-based management, additional infrastructure will be required (beyond the fencing). Another well will need to be established to supply new water troughs, and this will likely require additional power supplied by Duke Energy. Additional feed troughs may be needed. Because the cross-fencing will almost certainly run through wet flood zones, the high-traffic areas near future gates and troughs will likely benefit from concrete slabs as a means to protect pasture integrity.



Working areas

We share a handling area with our neighbor for veterinary work and separating calves for weening. This area, which is formally owned by our neighbor, was built ~1960 and includes two holding pens, and lanes that lead to a working area. We maintain the handling area, including fences and chute.

Fencing

The exterior fence of our property is barbed wire. This fencing was in place at the time of purchasing the land and has been in place for many years. The property is also lined with trees and brush. Accordingly, exterior fencing requires frequent repairs.

The NE pasture is barbed wire on the north and field fence on the three other faces.

Our long-term goal is to establish pasture cross-fencing for rotation-based management.

Water

Before we farmed this property cattle exclusively accessed water from a natural pond. We've established a well-water fed trough in the main pasture and a smaller trough in the NE pasture. The trough in the NE pasture is readily mobile, which has been helpful for improving access to injured animals.

Access to the pond provides a natural water source for drinking and cooling. However, we are seeking guidance from veterinarians and water conservation agencies to determine if we should restrict cattle access as a means to reduce the risk of disease spread and conservation of the ecosystem.

Financing

Initial financing has been self-funded through a combination of loans and savings. Cattle sales have not yet been revenue positive on a cash basis as we've retained heifers for herd expansion, but this should change with 2024 sales. Surplus hay will be marketed in fall 2024, offsetting winter feed costs. Net revenue from all operations will be re-invested, with long-term goals of (1) improving calf and cow outcomes and (2) acquiring additional acreage in the nearby area for grazing, forest conservation, and fruit crops.