

News

North Carolina Research Campus, Kannapolis

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Local Farmer Awarded Funding from N.C. Value-Added Cost Share Program

Bobcat Farms: A Family Livestock Operation Looking to Diversify

KANNAPOLIS, N.C. – Henry and Tracy Moore of Bobcat Farms in Clinton, N.C., recently received an N.C. Value-Added Cost Share (NCVACS) award. Bobcat Farms began in 1993 with the construction of a sow farm for pork production, raising weaned pigs. Over time, the business grew with a second sow farm and a swine finishing operation. Situated on 500 acres, the Moores began diversifying the farm nearly 10 years ago by adding beef cattle and crop land for corn and forage. Though they initially sold their Black Angus cattle at livestock auctions, they began direct marketing their beef in 2007. Having enjoyed some success with minimal advertising, the Moores plan to expand their beef business to provide further financial diversity and security for the farm. Bobcat Farms received one of nine cost share awards. This will help reduce the costs of applying for a USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG). The federal grant provides its recipients with supplemental funding for business growth and development.

NCVACS is administered by N.C. MarketReady, a program of N.C. Cooperative Extension, located at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis. Funded by the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission, the cost share program was launched in 2009 to encourage more North Carolina producers to apply for federal funding and to generate more competitive applications. Bobcat Farm's award consists of a \$3,000 cost share for grant writing assistance for the VAPG-Working Capital grant and \$15,000 for a feasibility assessment.

Word of mouth has been the primary means of marketing for Bobcat Farms beef. Their first customers were local friends and family who have shared their satisfaction with other friends and neighbors. In addition, Bobcat Farms has created a Web site and brochure to reach more customers. They hope to expand their direct market avenues to include shares as part of community supported agriculture programs (CSAs), farmers markets and buying clubs. They also plan to supply boutique retail outlets with a full complement of branded beef cuts and the food service industry with boxed ground beef patties.

Currently, Bobcat Farms maintains a herd of 160 brood cows, marketing 160 head of beef annually. In the short term, they plan to grow the pure-bred herd to 250 head. They raise all the beef processed and

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marketed by Bobcat Farms and are developing branding materials including a logo and point-of-sale materials.

The business structure is a partnership with Henry's parents and they employ a swine manager and a cattle manager. By executing a feasibility study, the Moores hope to identify areas of improvement for production efficiencies and assess the market demand for branded beef. The USDA working capital grant would be used to offset packaging, processing and distribution expenses associated with launching their branded beef into new market areas.

The Moores hope that their venture into beef production and marketing will serve as an example to other North Carolina farmers looking to diversify their operations. Ultimately they hope to coordinate with other producers to meet customer demand for North Carolina beef.

N.C. MarketReady, formerly known as the Program for Value-Added & Alternative Agriculture, is a program of N.C. Cooperative Extension, which is an educational outreach of N.C. State University and N.C. A&T State University. N.C. MarketReady's multidisciplinary team builds partnerships and educational resources to help North Carolina agriculture be more profitable. N.C. MarketReady is a partner of the Plants for Human Health Institute at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis. Learn more at www.ncmarketready.org or www.ces.ncsu.edu.

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