



Land is the logical place to start in taking inventory of your available resources. For a cow-calf system of production you should allow at least two acres to support a cow and her calf. You probably need ten acres for a small cow-calf operation. It gets more practical for you if you have 20-30 acres to use as pasture. For a finishing operation with a couple of steers you would not need as much land since they can be kept in a small pen. As little as one acre could be used in this system but simply because you have an acre doesn't mean it's time to buy cattle. Check the zoning for your land to be sure that livestock are allowed in your area.

Labor needed will depend upon the system you use and number of animals you have. The only constant labor a cow-calf system requires is checking cattle and fences. Winter feeding and health treatments are the major occasional labor efforts needed. Steer feeding will require more steady attention since animals need to be fed daily but this should only take a few minutes if properly planned.

Facilities are important, and if you are not willing or able to invest in adequate facilities, you should not enter the cattle business. Pastures obviously need to be enclosed by fence and should also be divided by cross fences, so you can keep animals in one area for a period of time and then move them to another to allow the grass to grow. You will need some means of containing the cattle such as a corral, and a way to separate out animals one at a time such as a chute with a gate controlling a "Y" into two pens. A squeeze chute is useful for holding cattle still for examination or treatment and includes a head gate to hold the animal's neck and a moveable side on the chute which can be squeezed up against the animal's side. Some type of loading ramp may also be needed, as well as feed and mineral boxes and automatic water sources. Plans for these facilities are available through the Florida Plan Service at each County Extension Office. Examples are given in the publication AE-6, "Building Plans for Small Farms and Ranchettes."

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