

# Keeping Local Traditions Alive During COVID-19 with Virtual Farm Tours

M. Pinkerton and J.K. Yarborough  
UF/IFAS Extension Seminole County

## VIRTUAL Farm TOURS 2021

### Situation

In Seminole County, Farm Tour is a long-time tradition, held for over 20 years, to encourage support of local farms and educate residents on how their food is grown. Historically, Seminole County residents attended an in-person educational tour of local farms, but in 2020, this event did not occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, continued COVID-19 precautions threatened the ability to host Farm Tour once again.



### Educational Methods

To ensure a safe educational opportunity, Farm Tour pivoted to a virtual format for the very first time in 2021. In collaboration with the Seminole County Government TV, agents developed six videos touring local agricultural operations. Each video was also paired with a UF/IFAS blog that discussed video content and educational themes in more detail. Content was widely promoted across multiple social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.) and aired on local TV during a week-long agriculture awareness event in May 2021. A follow-up survey was used to measure outcomes.



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### Video Schedule and Topics

Each video included farmer-led content and agent narrations recorded right on the farm. Scan the QR codes below to watch each video and be linked to the accompanying blogs.



Day 1: Visiting Big Daddy's Organic Farm. Farmer Rex Clonts talks about organic agriculture.



Day 2: Visiting Ed Yarborough Ranch, Inc. JK Yarborough discusses livestock and nutrient recycling.



Day 3: Visiting Pappy's Patch. Farmer Rex Clonts covers agritourism and U-pick operations.



Day 4: Visiting White's Red Hill Groves. Farmer Ed White discusses Florida's history with citrus and citrus packing.



Day 5: Visiting South Seminole Farm and Nursery. Farmer Jim Hunter talks about Florida's nursery industry.



Day 6: Visiting with Dennis the Bee Guy and his beehives to learn about pollination and beekeeping.



### Results

Through multiple social media platforms, the Virtual Farm Tour reached over 2,700 and continues to be shared online, on TV and in the classroom.

In a follow-up survey, 100% of individuals (n=67) adopted at least one practice supporting local agriculture after viewing the Virtual Farm Tour.

- 83.6% purchased more local agricultural products.
- 71.6% helped to protect honey bees and other pollinators.
- 65.7% checked the label of produce in the store to see where it was grown.
- 55.2% participated in an agritourism activity.
- 44.7% encouraged youth to explore careers in agriculture.

### Conclusions

The 2021 Seminole County Virtual Farm Tour used a novel approach to keep the Farm Tour tradition alive and led to the development of long-lasting educational videos on local agriculture. The unique use of virtual field experiences in the Farm Tour video series was very well received by viewers and participating farmers also demonstrated great support for the continued use of asynchronous videos to teach residents about agriculture. A virtual component will undoubtedly continue to be an important part of the farm tour tradition in future years.

### Contact

Morgan Pinkerton,  
407-665-5554  
[morgan0402@ufl.edu](mailto:morgan0402@ufl.edu)

