

PROCLAMATION

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

WHEREAS, according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, nearly 300,000 acres of land in Marion County are home to over 3,300 farms, including 1,200 horse farms; and

WHEREAS, the American Horse Council Foundation's 2023 Equine Economic Impact Study for Marion County indicates that: one-fifth of the County's employment is tied to the equine industry with approximately 28,500 people; one-fifth of the County's landmass at over 200,000 acres; and one-fifth of the County's economy with 22% of the GDP and an annual \$4.3 Billion impact; and

WHEREAS, since 2001, Ocala/Marion County has been known as the "Horse Capital of the World®", due to the abundance of rolling green pastures with mineral rich soil, and as a testament to the County's unique involvement in all things equestrian and its record of producing some of the finest and world-class champions in the sport; and

WHEREAS, in 2005, the Marion County Commission designated approximately 200,000 acres in the northwest portion of the County as the Farmland Preservation Area, to provide a buffer for farmland against increasing growth, and to protect the valuable soils, water quality and spring sheds; and

WHEREAS, since 2008 Save Our Rural Areas has hosted the Farmland Preservation Festival to raise awareness about the importance of preserving farms in Marion County for future generations; and in 2022 and 2023, Horse Farms Forever, Inc.® worked in partnership with Marion County to amend its Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code to further preserve, protect, support, and enhance the rural, equestrian, and farmland character of the Farmland Preservation Area;

NOW THEREFORE, the Board of County Commissioners of Marion County, Florida, by virtue of the authority vested in us do hereby proclaim that **April 2026** be known as

"FARMLAND PRESERVATION MONTH"

DULY PROCLAIMED this 7th day of **April, 2026**.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA**

CARL ZALAK, III, CHAIRMAN

MATT MCCLAIN, VICE CHAIR

KATHY BRYANT, COMMISSIONER

ATTEST:

MICHELLE STONE, COMMISSIONER

GREGORY C. HARRELL, CLERK

CRAIG CURRY, COMMISSIONER