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ON THE COVER

Strip cropping with hay, Grand Traverse County, Michigan. Photo by Lynn Betts, courtesy of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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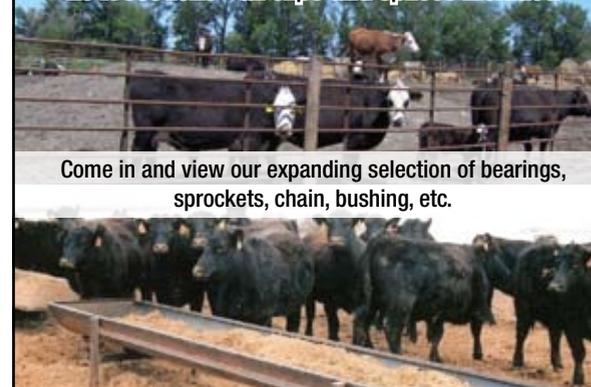
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Wachtman Agri Supply Makes Equipment To LAST!

For the past 21 years, owner Loren Wachtman and his crew have been manufacturing and selling long-lasting, competitively priced plastic fertilizer augers for use with gravity wagons, trucks and planters.

"We offer fertilizer and seed handling auger systems, using plastic to reduce corrosion and maintenance," Loren says.

And now, as part of their commitment to keep up with the latest trends in agriculture, they're offering seed-fill systems for today's new no-till grain drills which feature flexible, polypropylene bristle fighting to move soybeans and other fragile seeds quickly and easily while still maintaining high quality.

"We're concerned about the quality and durability of our systems," Loren says.

"Having grown up on a farm, I know the importance of high quality and durable equipment."

Wachtman Agri Supply offers horizontal crossaugers for most popular 4-

16-row planters and 15- and 20-foot grain drills; mounted truck and gravity wagon augers; and such accessories as 6-inch steel-core bristle fighting and 6-inch plastic fighting with a stainless-steel core.



Loren is especially proud of his new radius-track drill-fill auger.

On this unit, a single vertical auger is taken out of the transport cradle and the hopper is placed on the ground behind the center of the drill.

The upper portion of the auger is held

in place by a trolley, which travels from side to side on a radius track that's mounted behind the drill.

As the auger travels from side to side, the intake hopper remains in its original position on the ground.

This auger features PVC tubing, a plastic hopper and either steel-core bristle fighting or plastic cupped fighting. Loren's Rust Evader Auger Systems have been formally recognized as Showstoppers at the National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville.

Loren is planning a larger building in the near future to accommodate his growing business and he's looking forward to offering new products for the constantly changing agricultural equipment market.

And while his business IS going strong, it's not too big to care about the individual farmer.

"We feel we're still small enough to provide our customers with personalized, helpful service," he says.

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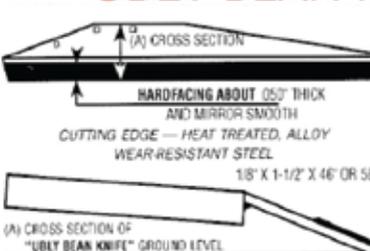
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There has been some speculation about the acceptability of the direct harvest system due to the high losses of beans.

Uibly Bean Knife Mfg., Inc. is now working on new products and modifications to existing products to effectively cut the losses when used with the direct harvest machines. These products may be just the answer to all manufacturers of bean equipment and bean farmers, with regard to prevention of bean losses.

While still in the development stages, Uibly Bean Knife Mfg., Inc. expects to have these products available to the testers by this fall.

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In addition to the unique lockdown system, the tarp boasts a rip-stop fabric that is rope and fiber reinforced, waterproof,

shrink-proof and is among the heaviest hay tarps sold. Tarps are white in color and come treated with a special coating, both are critical components in combating the sun's damaging UV Rays. Tarps are offered in 27 different sizes guaranteed to cover just about any hay configuration you can dream up.



The founder Earl Miller passed away in 2004 and the company is now owned and operated by Owensville, Missouri, residents Bruce Paneitz and Randy Blaske. The two partners are committed to continuing the business under the principles of which it was built, offering a quality product at a reasonable price, backed by exceptional service.

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Pierce County, Peterson Family Dairy to host 2010 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days



The Wisconsin Farm Technology Days is the largest agriculture exposition in Wisconsin--a three-day outdoor event that showcases the latest improvements in production agriculture. Each year, it is held in a different Wisconsin county - on a different host family farm.

Thirty-eight Wisconsin counties have hosted the event over the years but this will be the first time for Pierce County, and the Pierce County UW-Extension staff are excited and motivated to lead efforts toward an outstanding show.

Power of Agriculture is the theme of the 2010 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days. Throughout the three-day event, held July 20-22, visitors will have an opportunity to see the latest in technology, enjoy hands-on activities, and view demonstrations. The FTD will feature more than 600 exhibitors.

The event is also known for its fun for the entire family.

Among other things, there will be an arts and crafts tent, a family living tent with entertainment and music, a booth telling the history of Pierce County, equine performances with horse trainers, a longhorn steer that does tricks, 4H and youth tents, a tractor driving contest, catered food, educational exhibits on native plants and soil conservation, plus lots of free things like notepads and Frisbees handed out.

This year's event will be held at the Roger and Bev Peterson family farm, now incorporated as Peterson Family Dairy, located on Highway 29 outside of River Falls in the western-most part of central Wisconsin.

To accommodate the needs for the event, the Petersons had



Aerial view of 2009 FTD - Grave Brothers Farm, LLC, Dodge County, WI

to adjust their crop rotation to include 250 acres of alfalfa, 80 acres for parking for tent city, and 60 acres for hay ground. All this plus deciding to accelerate their already-planned expansion from 70 milking cows to over 250 and add a new free-stall barn, milking parlor, sand-manure separation system, 250-long blacktop feed pad for cows, and a 2.8-million gallon manure storage pit, plus an addition soon for the calf shed. The goal is to have everything new finished by June so that it would be done before the estimated 80,000 people show up to attend the three day event. (It should be noted that the Petersons' expansion was already planned due to the growth in their family business and financed on their own, and in no way related to hosting the FTD, nor was it financed by the any part of the show.)

Wisconsin Farm Technology Days is billed as "the largest outdoor show moving from county to county in North America." Farm Technology Days, Inc., a non-profit organization, has held the event since 1954.

For more information visit the website at www.wifarmtechnologydays.com or www.piercefarmtech.com

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Jim Stevenson has been in agriculture his whole life. His five sons joined him in his ventures, which went from pasturing cattle while working for a ranch to farming, leasing ranches and at one time owning a 221sq. Mile ranch.

Jim is a grand old country gentleman, who will be eighty-three years young this September. Jim is the epitome of

optimism and believes the measure of a man is his word. Jim and wife Dorthy will celebrate their 63th wedding anniversary this summer. They claim their greatest accomplishment is their boys but it is far from their only.

Living through the tougher times in life Jim had also learned to be very deep innovative thinker so it was that when his hay fields began to rut from the irrigation pivots, Jim decided something needed to be done about it. He looked at and tried the available technology of the time but found them wanting. Different nozzles left dry spots in the field, larger tires left larger ruts and more wear and tear on gear boxes, wider tires left wider ruts and more damaged pasture.

In Jim's mind the answer would be to fill the ruts with a road base material the question was how was the best way to do it. Jim designed a small box with a

funnel at the bottom and began filling his ruts. The neighbors took notice and began to ask him to build them one.

Jim catches his fourth son Otie broke down in the hayfield and tells him, "I have a job for you."

Otie says he remembers thinking, just what I need is another job. Looking back in retrospect Otie now says he wishes he'd thrown his hay tools down on the spot and went to the shop. However he finished his haying and did not make it to designing the track filler until late fall. Otie spent the winter working out the bugs and making it big enough to haul 28,000 lbs or ten yards.

The track filler that emerged is a one man operation, which is able to distribute the filling material and adjust the mound to the desired height, which is then packed by the pivot tires as they roll over. The box funnels the dirt to a two foot by four foot hydraulic controlled gate which gravity flows the filler into the rut. The heavy hydraulic controlled screed on the bottom helps knock in the sides while adjusting the mound height. There is a vibrator available for those who have really wet fill material.

The main frame is constructed of heavy 3"x5" box beam and welded with a dual-shield MIG welding process for extra strength and set on and undercarriage consisting of two extra heavy rocker arms with four spindles rated at 8000# each. It has also been used for filling road ruts and hauling grain.

Jim and wife Dorthy dubbed the company OTECO and they are made in Wheatland, WY. Soon afterwards they received the patent on them and have since sold them all over the western U.S and as far away as Canada and Australia.

Jim and Otie work hard to keep their customers happy but the original design has proven sound and adjustments have been minimal. The testimonials have been very good.

"We're just praising the Lord." Says owners, Jim, Dorthy, Otie & Tonya Stevenson.

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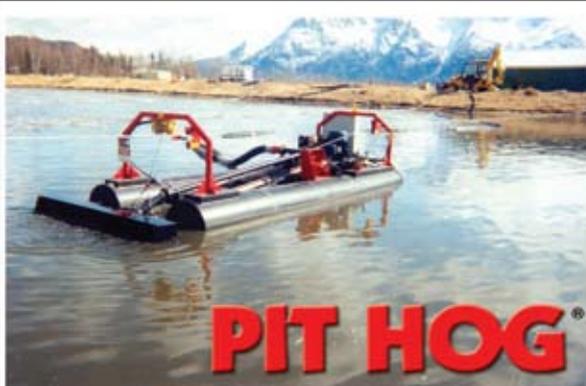
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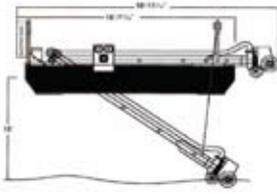
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Delta-Tooth Harrow

The Shape Of The Future

Invented in 1988 by a Colorado rancher, the Delta-Tooth Harrow brings new life to an old implement. Totally redesigned to eliminate the problems inherent in other flexible harrows, the Delta-Tooth consists of a series of cast triangles and connectors bolted together in a pattern. This unique design allows for very tight tine spacing, more weight per foot, and superior longevity, creating the most versatile

harrow ever built. A quick comparison between the Delta-Tooth harrow and others:

Will it tangle? No, regardless of how roughly it has been used or how old it is, it will never tangle. Is it easy to repair? Yes, if needed the harrow can be repaired right in the field with two small wrenches. Does it self clean? Yes, because it is heavier and travels with a shaking motion, trash will accumulate to a certain

point then the harrow will roll it out. Can it be pulled at high speeds? Yes, speeds up to 15mph are common.

Distributed by Hi-Valley Manufacturing in Kremmling Colorado, the Delta-Tooth Harrow is custom assembled to each customer's exact need. We offer three bolt patterns, and custom widths to fit every budget. For more information please contact Dave or Chris Sammons 970-724-9488. 

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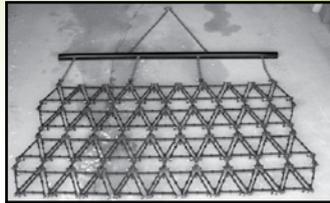
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Delta-Tooth Harrow

THE SHAPE OF THE FUTURE

Advantages of the Delta Tooth

- Will not fold over on itself, allowing tight turns. Travels at high speeds
- Will not tangle.
- Will fold up for easy transportation on Trailer or pickup.
- Can be pulled end-wise through small gates.
- Will wear longer because the material is considerably harder than steel rods yet it has great strength and good ductility.
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Unlike traditional twisted polywire products, PowerFlex PolyBraid is constructed in a tightly braided configuration giving it more strength, better conductivity and more longev-

ity. The 660', 880' and 1320' lengths come with 9 stainless steel conductors. Lengths of 1320' and 2640' also come with mixed metal filaments consist-



ing of 6 strands of stainless steel and 3 strands of tinned copper. With the braided configuration, the filaments repeatedly overlap which assures a continuous flow of electricity.

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C&R Supply, Inc.

Birth Of A Sprayer

After carefully listening to customers who were disappointed with the performance or lack of features in ATV sprayers available, C&R Supply set out to design a series of sprayer to meet their needs.

"Instead of taking an off the shelf tank and attaching features, we needed to get all the input we could from customers and ATV manufacturers", said product manager Dusty Miller. "With a good vision of what features and options were required, it became obvious that a completely new tank design was needed".

The EZ ATV Sprayer was designed with the operator in mind for ease of operation and functional ability and safety. With the sleek design brings the weight forward and more to a center of gravity for better machine balance. Allowing the legs of the tank to wrap around the fenders of the ATV gives the sprayer dual sumps to give maximum drainage and the ability to run on side hills

without losing its prime. The pump, strainer, and main shut-off are mounted underneath the tank in a protected cavity, which also serves as a dual slosh baffle. The top of the tank is designed



Spray 30 feet wide with no boom

with a fill catch area to prevent chemical from getting on the operator. The EZ is fitted with a 4 gpm Shurflo Pump and a quality Tee-Jet trigger style handgun in the convenient control panel at your side. All brackets and boomless nozzle or boom accessories are attached to the

tank for quick and easy mounting. The EZ ATV Sprayer has several different options and accessories to meet your requirements and needs.

C&R Supply, Inc. is a distributor and manufacturer of agricultural and roadside spray equipment located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. For over 25 years, C&R Supply, Inc. has been a leader in the distribution and servicing of many quality products from Raven Industries, Spraying Systems, Banjo, and more. They also lead the way in designing and manufacturing new and advanced products such as their C&R Foam Marker, Spot Sprayer, and the EZ ATV Sprayer featured in this ad. C&R is a provider for precision ag products such as GPS guidance systems, variable rate controllers, mapping, steering assist systems, and chemical injection units. C&R prides themselves on the knowledge and experience that is required to keep up with today's technology. 📞

TSR Parts Inc.

TSR Parts Inc. is a family owned/operated business located in Colgate, ND. The TSR Straw Chopper developed from a need for service parts for John Deere combines. TSR takes great pride in their work and do their best to have complete satisfaction from all their customers. All their products are Made in the USA. TSR product adds both value and increased productivity to every farm operation. TSR has a complete line of replacement units and component parts that have evolved to now include the current line of John Deere STS combines. TSR expanded line also includes complete units and component parts to fit Case IH Axial Flow combines and hydraulic cylinder depth stops. These lines are now available to the worldwide markets. If residue management has been an issue in the past, the addition of a complete TSR fine chop straw chopper or updating your factory straw chopper with TSR component parts, is the solution. If you had to purchase a separate piece of equipment to deal with residue that pulled behind your tractor, there would be additional passes over the fields. The TSR fine chop straw chopper will minimize the need for additional tillage after harvest due to the chopper's ability to shred residue very fine, saving both time and money. Utilizing the fine chop straw chopper makes for an ideal planting bed for those farmers practicing no-till conservation planting methods. TSR works hard to make every part of their product top of the line in both function and workmanship. All TSR products carry a 1 year warranty on their parts against any defects. Take a look at their full line of products on-line at www.tsrparts.com 📞

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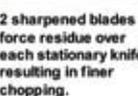
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Tri-States Grain Conditioning, Inc.

The Importance Of Grain Temperature Detection

Temperature is the key to safe grain storage. When grain goes out of condition, regardless of the cause, there is always an unusual increase in temperature. Temperature is the only truly accurate indicator of grain quality for those who manage grain.

Knowledge of the causes of deterioration and spoilage in grain is essential to the grain manager. Although more is yet to be learned, grain workers and scientific researchers have jointly given much sound information with which to work.

To point out the uses of a grain temperature system, we will discuss various applications of temperature information.

Grain is a living organism. Like other living things, it breathes (respires) and it may become sick. Excessive moisture, high temperature, and poor grain condition (damaged kernels) are generally considered the most important factors that lead to trouble in stored grain.

The use of moisture tests in receiving grain is an indication of the great importance given moisture as a criterion for storage ability. Some tend to over-emphasize moisture content to the exclusion of all other factors, but low moisture content is not enough to ensure trouble-free storage. In fact, deterioration from excessive moisture can occur in grain which is placed in storage at a uniform moisture content below that considered safe for long term storage. Temperature and atmospheric changes can cause certain areas within a mass of stored grain to rise in moisture above the critical safe moisture level.

Temperature importance is best indicated by the use of refrigeration to keep foodstuffs, and by the tendency of high temperatures to speed most chemical reactions.

Grain condition refers to the soundness of grain. It has been demonstrated that

unsound grain (grain with a high percentage of damaged kernels, greater number of microorganisms, and with deteriorative chemical changes) is much more likely to heat in storage than sound grain of the same moisture content. Both grain respiration and the growth of microorganisms are thought to be affected when grain is unsound.

Now let us examine the causes of heating, and determine their relationship to grain deterioration and spoilage.

The three specific causes of heating that are of interest to you are:

1. **respiration of the grain itself (metabolism of viable grain)**
2. **microflora (microorganisms such as fungi and bacteria)**
3. **insect infestation.**

All three contribute to total respiration and heat production below 135° F. One type of heating alone can cause trouble, but one type of heating can also serve to

trigger another problem which will contribute to total heat production.

Grain respiration increases as the moisture content of grain increases. This increase is gradual until a critical moisture content is passed. Respiration then increases faster than the heat of respiration can be dissipated. This will cause a marked temperature rise, but corrections are possible before damage is done; i.e. aerate, turn, or dry. This condition will occur in grain of relatively high moisture content and in cases of moisture translocation.

The increased temperatures are likely to excite the other two causes of heating. When grain respiration alone is the cause of heating, visual inspection of the trouble area, while turning, will show little evidence of cause. If moisture translocation has brought about the increased rate of respiration of the grain, aeration can be employed to correct the situation.

If the moisture content of the entire lot of grain approaches or exceeds the critical limit, and if grain drying equipment is available, drying is advisable, especially as a precaution against future problems.

The important thing for us to note about microorganisms is the fact that they respire and tend to increase the rate of respiration of the grain. Thus a rise in temperature can mean microorganism growth. If the temperatures of the grain mass are low, such growth can be slow and temperature rises relatively small.

Slowly rising temperatures warrant investigation of the causes. When indications appear, look closely for growth of microorganisms as you inspect your grain.

During the last 70 years, many factors have made accurate temperature knowledge even more important than before. For example:

1. Grain is stored longer and in larger bins, making the risk in holding it greater.
2. Damage from insect infestation is great.
3. Grain is harvested and often stored when it has high moisture content.
4. There is a greater demand for top quality grain.
5. The cost of handling and moving grain has increased. It costs from 2-1/2 to 5 cents per bushel to move grain. Accurate temperature information allows an operator to turn his grain only when it must be turned.
6. Buyers today want assurance that

grain purchased is of uniform quality throughout. Unless a grain manager has temperature records, one cannot be certain of the condition of purchased grain.

7. With the use of aeration systems, temperature knowledge is essential. The grain manager must know if and when hot spots are forming before the aeration system can do a thorough and economical job.

These are the reasons why temperature information is important to a modern cost-conscious grain manager. No matter what type of grain is stored, the same basic principle holds true: **You must know the temperature of your grain to know**

the condition of your grain. It is imperative that the grain manager has accurate, complete, and up-to-date temperature information for good grain management. Monitoring the temperature of grain on a regular basis gives the manager the best chance to make a correction when a temperature change is occurring. Knowing the temperature of the grain makes it possible for the fans to be run only when they are needed, saving money in utilities.

Now, there are several ways to obtain this temperature. 1) You could use the "Feel and Smell" method. All that is required here is for the grain manager to feel the side of his bin and smell inside the bin in an at-

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tempt to detect heating. Another variation of this method is while turning the grain, it is felt, smelled, and/or visually inspected on a belt or at a spout outlet to detect heating. Obviously, this method has its drawbacks, due to the limited knowledge these observations will bring.

2) The “**Thermometer Method**” is another way to read temperatures. With this method, pipes are inserted into the grain mass and a thermometer lowered into them. After a time, the thermometer is raised and the temperature read for that point. This method also has several serious drawbacks. 1) It is very time consuming. (A thermometer is not designed to furnish quick readings). 2) It must also pass through grain temperatures which are above or below that which is to be measured. 3) It must be read very



quickly once it is withdrawn from the pipe, and often in a poorly-lit area, making fast, accurate readings nearly impossible. 4) In addition, currents are set up inside the pipe itself which may affect the readings. Although much better than the “feel and smell” method, the thermometer leaves much to be desired in all phases of accuracy, dependability and speed of obtaining temperatures.

3) A third concept is the **thermocouple cable method**. A thermocouple is nothing more than two dissimilar metals soldered together to make a heat sensing point. TSGC, Inc. cables have thermocouples made of copper and constantan (an alloy of copper and nickel), the most sensitive combination made for grain bin temperature scanning systems. Thermocouples are the most widely

used temperature sensor for several reasons. 1) They are rugged, low-cost, dependable, and accurate. 2) The measurement is a point measurement with fairly quick response to temperature change. 3) Watching the trend (changes) of the temperatures provides a clear indication of unusual temperature activity.

We will repeat again the paragraph we began with: *Temperature is the key to safe grain storage and quality grain. When grain goes out of condition, regardless of the cause, there is always an unusual increase in temperature. Temperature is the only truly accurate indicator of grain quality for those who manage grain.*

TSGC, Inc. is one of the largest suppliers of grain temperature monitoring equipment in the world. Headquartered in America’s Heartland, our administration, fabricating, sales and service divisions are located in Spirit Lake, Iowa. We have an extensive network of contractors representing our products and services nationwide and in over forty countries. *TSGC, Inc. is dedicated to serving you.* ☞

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Magnetic, wireless tail lights are Terry Stiles’ solution to the frustration of trying to maintain conventional lights on his equipment and trailers. “Repairing or replacing broken tail

lights on farm equipment and boat trailers used to be an ongoing headache for me and many people I know,” the Malta Montana rancher says. “With the repair time and replacement costs involved, I knew there had to be a better way, so I

spent 2 ½ years designing and perfecting these portable, magnetic lights.”

The convenient system comes with two magnetically-backed lights, and a remote control transmitter for operating them while driving. The system provides turn signals, running lights, brake lights, and hazard lights, depending on the driver’s commands. The lights can be moved from one trailer to another in a matter of minutes without any tools.

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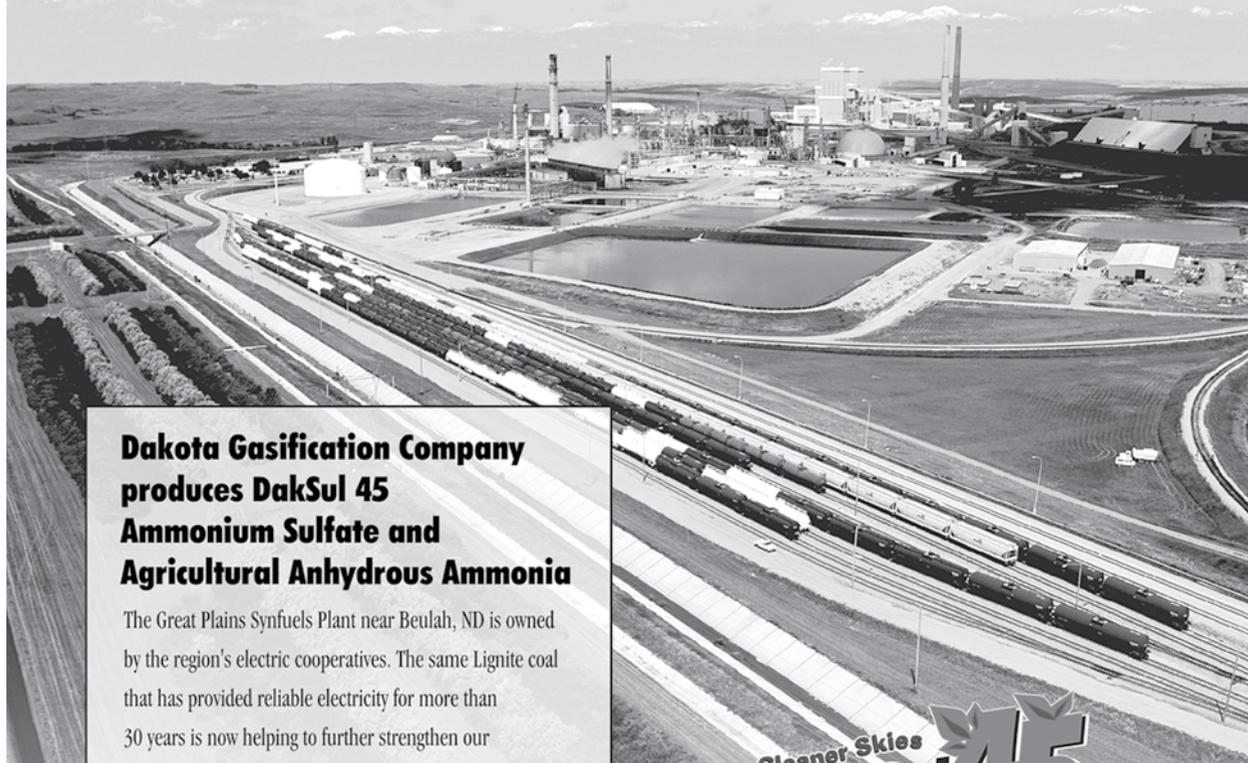


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Dry Creek Alpacas

When people think of Colorado most people think of the Rocky Mountains, big horn sheep and skiing. On the plains of Colorado travelers will see wheat, corn and cattle grazing on the pastures. Visit Holyoke, Colorado and you will find a family owned and operated alpaca farm.

Why alpacas? This is the first question people ask us when they find out we breed alpacas. The answer is exactly their question. Why not alpacas? We owned 6 acres of land with a big red 100 year old barn. It just seemed a shame to see the barn not being used. We both had jobs and we both missed not having some sort of livestock around. Alpacas seemed to be answer.

It was about 5 years ago and we were traveling through Nebraska to go fishing and saw these beautiful alpacas gracing by the edge of the highway. At the same time we looked at each other without saying a word and thought the same thought. Alpacas. Could these animals fill the void we were looking for? What an investment opportunity for our retirement.

We searched the internet to find out more about them. It was 3 weeks later Dry Creek Alpacas was born. We purchased our first pregnant females and two fiber males. Our herd was on its way. It wasn't long before we bought another bred female. It was surprising how our herd has

grown. It was more of diction, passion, and wanting to learn more. The experience and joy of alpacas is unbelievable.

Unlike other livestock, alpacas are not slaughtered in the United States. They



are strictly bred and raised for their fiber. Every spring our family shears, skirts, washes, cards and spins the fleece into yarn. When asked what we would be doing for the summer. Simply, we are working with fleece. The more a person learns about alpaca fleece the more a person has to wonder why the secret isn't out. The benefits of alpaca fleece are amazing. It's no wonder they were considered the gold of the Aztecs. Some of the yarn is either sold as skeins or knitted into scarves, hats or socks for our customers. You'll find Dry Creek Alpacas at area craft shows selling socks, sweaters, hats, gloves and yarn.

We give talks to area groups about alpacas and the benefits of owning alpacas

or alpaca products. Don't be surprised to find one of our alpacas walking down the hall of the school or at the library. A reservation isn't needed to have a tour of our farm. Our alpacas love visitors and give paca kisses to anyone willing to give one back. You'll also find us on line at drycreekpacas.com. Follow the adventures of our alpacas and keep up with the latest news on facebook.

Because we are small family operated farm, we know the concerns alpaca breeders have. We have been there done that. Sharing experiences, knowledge and giving a helping hand is what it's all about. Our breeding goals are strictly for breeding for quality not quantity. Having alpacas has produced great opportunity for us. The life lessons it teaches our 14 and 11 year old daughters. Every spring we still look forward to our first cria being born. Watching as it tries to stand up. Running so fast and barely missing every ones legs within inches. We are saddened when the last cria is born and having to wait until next spring for the next one to be born. We still enjoy hearing everyone's triumphs and success. Ohhing and ahhing over other alpaca pictures. Ever wondered if owning alpacas is for you? Visit an alpaca farm. Look deep into those big, soft and loving eyes and then ask the question.

Alpacas: Growing a Natural Fiber Industry

By Deb Hill, Cloud Dancer Alpacas, Lewistown, MT

Alpacas. You've seen 'em in the T.V. ads, you've seen 'em at the county fair, and you may even have seen them at a farm in your own neighborhood. They sure are cute, in a furry, space alien kind of way. But what are they really good for, and why would you want them on your farm?

In a word, diversified income streams. I guess that's really three words, but they are three important words for anyone in farming today. Let me share with you a little bit of the history of the alpaca industry, as well as some thoughts about its future, and perhaps you, too, will come to view them as more than just the latest wave of designer livestock.

First, a brief history: Alpacas are man-made. According to archaeological evidence, alpacas were developed from a relative of the camel called a vicuña, which lives in the mountainous terrain of South America. Thousands of years ago, native cultures recognized that vicuña have extremely fine fleeces – in fact, they produce one of the finest animal fibers on the planet. But there are some drawbacks: vicuñas are wild, hard to catch, and do not produce very much fiber. Over thousands of years, native people in South America bred vicuñas to produce better characteristics, and the result is the alpaca.

In the Pre-Incan and Incan cultures, alpacas were considered to be gifts from the gods. Alpaca fiber was woven into textiles for the Incan royalty, and was highly prized. Alpacas themselves were also prized, and played important ceremonial roles, including as sacrifices to the gods. With the coming of the Spanish to South America, however, alpacas were replaced by sheep and other, more traditional, livestock.

In the 1800's, alpacas were 'rediscovered'. Sir Titus Salt, an Englishman who created mechanized worsted mills, fell in love with alpaca fiber and began to import it, making a cloth that took the fashion world by storm. Thus began the modern alpaca fiber industry, and the international interest in its versatility.

Alpaca fiber is valued for its incredible softness (like the best cashmere), lovely drape, exceptional sheen (like silk), excellent insulating value, and strength. In addition, alpaca fleece comes in more natural colors than any other animal fiber! Anything that can be made out of wool can be made out of alpaca, although the majority of alpaca fabric produced every year is used in the high-end fashion industry.



In 1980's, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile, which contain the majority of the world's alpacas, began allowing them to be exported. Almost immediately, alpacas arrived in the United States. Since their arrival, the goal of U.S. breeders has been the creation of a North American alpaca fiber industry.

Currently there are three national alpaca organizations. The breed organization, the Alpaca Owners and Breeders Association (AOBA) serves to promote alpacas and alpaca products in the U.S. This organization produces the industry journal, Alpacas Magazine, runs the national alpaca show, trains alpaca judges, and is the primary marketing wing of the industry.

The majority of alpacas in the U.S. are registered through the breed registry, the

ARI (the Alpaca Registry, Inc.). ARI is responsible for maintaining the pedigree information for registered alpacas, insuring compliance with registration rules (all registered alpacas are blood typed to prove parentage using DNA analysis), and is undertaking the U.S. alpaca EPD (Estimated Progeny Difference) program.

Developing alpaca fiber products, and finding markets for those products, falls under the management of the Alpaca Fiber Cooperative of North America (AFCNA). A true member cooperative, AFCNA collects alpaca fiber after shearing each year, contracts for it to be graded and sorted, and has developed several end products made from member fiber.

Since its beginnings in 1984, the U.S. alpaca industry has primarily focused on growth, for one important reason: to develop viable fiber markets, you need to produce enough fiber to meet the demands of the consumer. Currently there are approximately 150,000 alpacas registered with ARI. Compare that to the almost 7 million sheep in the U.S. (according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture), and you can see how small the U.S. alpaca 'herd' really is.

The small number of alpacas in the U.S. is the reason that most of the farms are focused on running breeding programs, rather than on fleece production. We simply lack enough fiber, at this point in time, to begin commercial production of U.S. alpaca products. We need more fleece!

The highest quality fleece on an alpaca is called the 'blanket' and is generally located where a saddle blanket would go on a horse. Other fiber, such as neck, britch (rear), and upper leg can be quite good, but on most alpacas it is the blanket fiber has the longest staple length, and the least guard hair. Alpacas are shorn every year, and typically their fiber becomes slightly coarser, and staple length declines, as they age. The very first fleece an alpaca produces, called its 'tui' fleece, is likely to be its best.

The garment industry has set an upper limit of around 27 microns in fineness for clothing. Using fiber that is coarser than 27 microns results in a finished garment will feel too "scratchy" to be worn next to the skin.

Some of our alpacas are too old to produce garment-quality fiber, and, of course, a small percentage was not good to begin with. If we subtract those animals that are too old to produce fine fiber, or which do not have fiber that meets the market criteria for garments, we see that the largest hurdle facing the U.S. alpaca industry today is... not enough alpacas! If we compare the alpaca fiber industry with another natural fiber, mohair, we can get a sense of the number of pounds of fiber needed to satisfy even a very tiny commercial market. According to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center at Iowa State University, in 2008 the U.S. mohair industry produced 1.2 million pounds of mohair from 193,5000 angora goats. On average, each goat sheared 5.3 pounds.

While no exact figures exist for alpacas, we can estimate the average blanket size of an alpaca to be between 3 and 6 pounds. Let's use 4.5 pounds as the average for this calculation. In order to provide the textile industry with 1.2 million pounds of alpaca fiber, we need to shear over 266,000 alpacas with fiber under 27 microns in fineness!

Even after 20-plus years of growth, our national alpaca herd is still too small to support a commercial fiber industry. Herd growth is slow because alpacas have only one offspring (called a 'cria') each year. Consequently, most farms are focused on producing excellent breeding stock, increasing herd size, and improving fiber through better genetics.

Despite the challenges of slow herd growth, fiber has not been ignored. While most alpaca farms are busy improving breeding stock, at the same time many take advantage of the high demand for alpaca fiber in their local areas. You will see alpaca fleeces, yarn and finished products for sale at ranch stores, at craft fairs, at farmer's markets, or in small retail outlets.

Cleaned and carded alpaca fleece generally sells for between \$2 and \$5 an ounce, and most farms find that their

fiber is in high demand by spinners and fiber artists. Knitters and weavers love alpaca yarns, and farms that have developed finished products (such as socks, gloves, scarves, hats, etc.) find that their customers keep coming back for more.



Alpaca yarns sell for about \$5 an ounce and up, socks retail for between \$10 and \$30 a pair, alpaca scarves sell in the \$40 to \$60 range, and alpaca sweaters may sell for as much as \$200 or more.



New fiber ventures have been developed in the past few years. These are often the result of several small farms working together to combine their clip (the total sheared fiber for the year) in order to create uniquely designed alpaca fiber products. As the market for alpaca fiber and fiber products grows, we will see increasing numbers of farms keeping 'fiber herds' (non-breeding alpacas raised solely for their fiber) to supply the growing demand of the commercial markets.

The future for the U.S. alpaca industry

looks quite bright, despite some slow-down in growth caused by the current difficult economy. Even with the recession, something on the order of 20,000 alpacas changed hands last year. Breeding stock still sells for several thousand to tens of thousands of dollars per animal. Farms that sell their alpaca fleece and fiber products report that they can easily sell enough to more than pay for the cost of keeping their alpacas.

How might alpacas help with diversifying your farm's income? Because they are relatively rare and unusual in appearance, alpacas generate a lot of interest. Farm visitation increases, which is beneficial for farms already engaged in direct sales to consumers. Adding alpaca products to the mix in your farm store is a great way to improve sales. Sale of alpaca breeding stock, if you have good animals, certainly helps with cash flow. As with everything, you should do some careful research first, to determine if alpacas are right for your farm, and to find out what you will need in order to successfully raise them.

For more information, visit an alpaca farm near you. Most alpaca owners are eager to share how they make their small farms a success, and would love to exchange ideas. Additional information may be found at the following websites:

www.alpacainfo.com (AOBA)
www.alpacaacademy.com (ARI)
www.afcna.com (AFCNA)

The bottom line is that the alpaca industry in the U.S. has seen continued growth, even in uncertain economic times, and the demand for alpaca fiber outstrips its production. As the industry develops, you can expect to see alpaca garments in mainstream retail outlets, and alpaca farms moving into traditional agricultural communities just like yours!

Deb Hill began raising alpacas in northern Arizona in 1996 and has served in a variety of leadership roles for industry organizations. With husband Don Sanfilippo, she runs Cloud Dancer Alpacas, which relocated to central Montana in 2009. Deb can be reached at cloud-dancer@infomagic.net or at (406) 538-3177, and the ranch website is www.clouddanceralpacos.com

ALPACAS – THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

People often ask us, “Can raising alpacas be a successful business venture?” The answer is, like any other business, it all depends.

Our experience raising alpacas since 1998, suggests that there are ten ingredients to success.

- High quality stock
- Savvy breeding selections
- Healthy, kindly treated, well-cared for alpacas
- Customer support
- A clean, well-managed paddock, grazing, and barn environment
- An effective marketing program
- Honest, straight-forward business practices
- Good business and budgetary sense
- Commitment to the alpaca industry
- A passion for the farming and ranching life

You could probably substitute any livestock for the word “alpaca” and the ingredients would remain the same. Are alpacas right for you? If you already have the land, the infrastructure, and livestock expertise, then you are way ahead of the curve.

The main source of income for Dundee Farm is selling high quality breeding stock AND exceptional stud services. Sara Jane is an AOBA Certified Judge, which has been invaluable to our own breeding program, educational for our customers, and provides additional income.



Babies running in the snow:
Strong, healthy alpacas are essential to success

So, what’s the answer? Yes, raising alpacas can be a very successful business venture. You just have to have the right ingredients.

Dundee Farm, owned and operated by Hugh and Sara Jane MacLennan in Sedalia, Colorado, has a standing herd of 25 solid colored alpacas of both rare and proven bloodlines.

DEATH, TAXES, AND ALPACAS

By Lynn Boak, Esq., Arroyo Seco Alpacas

What do they have in common? Not much, except that I’m going to talk about all of them in this article. First, death and taxes, commonly known as “death taxes,” more properly called “federal estate taxes.” The good news: they have been repealed. The bad news: only for this year. Instead is something called a “modified carry-over basis” which sounds, and is, complicated. What it means is that if you die this year, your heirs can elect a stepped up basis for some of your assets, but must use your carry-over basis for the rest. So, for example, if you bought a ranch in 1945, and your heirs want to sell it, they pay capital gains tax on the difference between the ranch’s 1945 value and its 2010 value. Ouch!



At the end of 2010, the estate tax comes back just as it was in 2001. The top rate is 55% with an exemption of the first \$675,000. In comparison, the exemption in 2009 was \$3.5 Million and the top rate was 45%. Bottom line: people who never thought they would need to will have to do some estate planning. And if you die this year, your heirs will have some complex decisions to make.

What do alpacas have to do with this? They are a livestock investment, just like your cattle or sheep. Unlike most livestock, there is no market for their meat and they are expensive. They can yield significant tax benefits. But, they can increase the value and complexity of your estate considerably.

As for tax benefits, you have no doubt heard of the section 179 deduction. This allows you to deduct all the depreciation on certain business assets in the first year. As much as \$250,000 was allowed in 2009 but is currently limited to \$133,000 unless Congress extends it. In 2011, this deduction falls to \$25,000, which limits its usefulness next year. Another caveat is that if all your income is from farming, you may not be able to take the full amount available. Yes, it’s complicated, but worth the effort to understand it.

The tax benefits of section 179 have allowed us to grow our herd, invest in the equipment we need, buy hay, compete in the show ring, and build a related retail business. We love the ani-

mals, the fiber and the business. The downside is that now we have to do some estate planning! I suppose it’s a good problem to have, and we have the expertise to deal with it ourselves.



I am a tax lawyer and my husband is an accountant. We worked for the IRS for 20 and 34 years, respectively. We have a wealth of tax, estate, and business planning experience to share, as well as knowledge about alpaca husbandry and the fiber industry. We also have some beautiful, high quality alpacas for sale and welcome visits to our farm. Come loaded with questions!

AlpacaKing's Rocky I

A true story about a very brave little alpaca

Story by Mary C. King
Photographs by Lindsey R. Annan



In October 2001, our daughter Lindsey and her husband Andy invited us to go with them to an alpaca show in Longmont. That was our first up close experience with alpacas. We both thought they were a unique, gentle animal and were interested in understanding more about the business. We especially thought it may be a good investment for our retirement years, and something we would enjoy. After the show, my husband Larry began researching alpacas on the internet.

Early in the spring of 2002 we purchased a small acreage in north Fort Collins. Larry's research continued to interest us. The more we learned, the more we began to formulate plans. Lindsey and Andy agreed to help if we decided to get into the business. Larry and I began visiting area farms to learn more about farm set-ups and the difference in quality of alpacas.

We decided to purchase white Peruvian Huacaya alpacas. Marcella was our first purchase in May 2002. She came preg-

nant and had a female cria, Lowansa, at side. Marcella delivered her cria in the fall of 2002—a female we named Al-lona. Now we had three white females. In the summer of 2003 we purchased a bay black female named May, and in the fall of 2004 Marcella delivered another white female that we named Abby.

Marcella was always a good mother. She also was now well established as the head alpaca in the pecking order. After Abby was born Marcella delivered a boy named Challenger, and a year later another girl named Aspen. This story is about Marcella's sixth cria we named Rocky.

I should mention here that our white Peruvian females were never very nice to May, our bay black female. They had their own little family and May was not included. The alpaca pecking order had reduced May to last place.

It was late in the afternoon of October 10, 2007, at Alpaca King, our Huacaya alpaca farm in Fort Collins, Colorado. All the alpacas were at the barn except May, our bay black female. Larry walked to the back pasture to get May and, to his surprise, found a little white alpaca chasing after her, trying to nurse. Larry scooped him up, brought him to the barn, and asked who he belonged to. Marcella was the only alpaca nearing the end of her gestation (two weeks out) but she wanted nothing to do with this

baby and she didn't look like she had given birth.

We called one of our veterinarians, Dr. Wheeler, to come and check Marcella. He determined that she was the mother, but that she didn't have any milk. He tubed the cria with goat colostrum. The next morning, Dr. Wheeler was able to milk some colostrum from Marcella and tubed that into the baby as well. Later that day, Marcella's milk finally came in, but there just wasn't enough.



Rocky with lopped ears

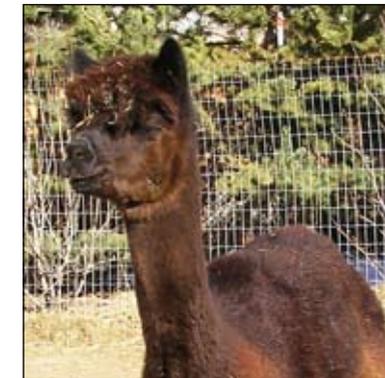
This little guy looked different —his fiber was hanging in long locks with lots of curl and density. He weighed 14 pounds, an average weight for a new cria, but the tips of his ears were lopped, which is an indication that he was premature.



Notice the fiber in the cria above is fluffy and smooth, but Rocky's fiber is so dense that it appears to break in clumps.

Sometimes when a cria is born prematurely or with a defect of some kind, the mother will often reject the cria and leave it to die. We wondered if that was

the reason his mother was rejecting him, or if it was because he looked different. Maybe the herd thought something was wrong with him since his fiber looked different from any other cria we ever had.



May was his only friend

Whatever the reason was, Marcella and the rest of the herd rejected this cria. They spit and kicked at him whenever he walked by and wanted nothing to do with him. May was the only one that didn't try to hurt him. His mother, Marcella, actually kicked him and pulled fiber from the back of his neck in an attempt to discourage him from trying to nurse from her.



Fiber missing from the back of Rocky's neck

But this new cria was extremely persistent in his attempt to nurse. No matter how many times he was kicked, he still tried to get nourishment. He was such a fighter! That is why Larry decided to name our new little cria Rocky.

We realized that we were going to have to bottle feed Rocky; it was a two person job. We began each feeding by giving Rocky a bottle of cow milk and yogurt. After he ate four ounces of milk, we held Marcella and encouraged Rocky to nurse from her. After several sessions, he learned how to nurse. She would let

him nurse as long as someone was holding her. We hoped that this would stimulate a nurturing instinct in Marcella. After a couple of weeks, I was able to hold Marcella without help, and Rocky was always eager to nurse. We repeated this regimen 10-12 times every day and through the night for several weeks.

We gave Marcella lactation herbs, extra alfalfa, and higher-protein hay hoping that her milk production would increase, but to no avail. For some reason she did not produce enough milk. It was suggested fresh goat milk would be better for Rocky, so we started him on fresh goat milk. After two weeks, the skin around his eyes and mouth turned red. He was really a sight, with his extremely dense fiber hanging in long locks and red skin around his eyes and mouth—he looked like a clown.



Rocky with fiber missing from nose and red around his eyes

I asked Dr. Wheeler to come out to look at him. His diagnosis was that Rocky was allergic to goat milk. What next?! Dr. Wheeler said we should go back to the cow's milk and yogurt, hoping he wouldn't be allergic to that.

During this examination Dr. Wheeler discovered bumps all over Rocky. I had noticed this earlier but had not said anything because I was hoping it would go away. I just didn't want to admit that another thing was wrong with Rocky. However, Dr. Wheeler informed me that the Suri breeders say this bumpy skin is a very good thing. We did some research and discovered that this bumpiness is caused by extra fiber follicles and is an indication that the alpaca will have very dense fiber. His conformation, energy and sweetness really drew us to him, but he truly was an ugly duckling. Rocky was very different from other alpacas we were accustomed to seeing.

Feeding time was really a fight. Rocky

just wanted his mother, and all of his energy went toward attempting to get nourishment. I was talking to Cory Bensley, a neighboring breeder, about



Arlene Francis

Rocky. He offered one of his females, known as the “barnyard smorgasbord.” Arlene Francis, a large Chilean alpaca with cria at side, came to offer her services. As soon as she arrived, Marcella was noticeably upset and was more willing to feed Rocky. Feeding did become easier with Marcella, but Rocky wanted to nurse all the time and she just didn’t have enough milk for him.

Even though Marcella was willing to nurse, she still didn’t nurture Rocky as she had done for her previous crias. Rocky was Marcella’s sixth cria and she had never treated her babies like this. Poor little Rocky was so alone.



Rocky settling down for the night

We had always made a bed of straw in one corner of the barn with a heat lamp for our new crias; none of them had ever used it. After the last feeding of the day Rocky turned a few circles and hummed as if he were looking for someone to care. Marcella turned her back and cushed at the far end of the barn. Rocky tried to cush near her but after being spit

at several times he turned and cushed on his little bed of straw in the corner furthest from Marcella. His only friend was our barn cat, Jag, who was just looking for a warm place to lay.



Finally asleep

By December 1st, Rocky weighed 25 pounds and held that weight until December 15th. For the next two weeks he gained a pound and lost a pound . . . and gained . . . and lost.



Rocky looking very thin and unhealthy

I called our other vet, Dr. Roberts, to come run a blood panel in order to determine if Rocky was metabolizing his food effectively or if something else was wrong with him. All tests came back normal. Our observation was that Rocky spent all day trying to get food. He would not suck a bottle so we had to force feed him. All he wanted was to nurse from his mother, but since she did not want him and did not produce enough milk, it soon was impossible for him to nurse from her at all. He chewed on straw or hay but was still too young to survive on this diet.

His teeth were too immature to chew

this kind of forage and get nourishment from it. His whole day was filled with frustration and rejection. He tried valiantly to eat and longed for his mother’s love but was continually turned away and rejected.



Sydni and Lilly, our granddaughters, with Rocky

I was becoming more and more concerned for Rocky. He was always bright and alert, but he just wasn’t growing. Something had to change. We consulted with Dr. Roberts and decided to take him from his mother and the herd before he suffered injury from their abuse. Now he was only 10 weeks old. The stress of the situation was mounting. It was mid-December, the Holiday Season was in full swing, I was preparing to go to Tennessee for a week to visit our daughter and family, and May, our Chilean, was due to have her cria by the end of the month. We were going to have to put Rocky and May in a setting where he would be under constant surveillance by caring people and she would be in a warm environment for the birth of her cria.

We decided to ask our good friends, Sue Johnson and Ellen Bryant, owners of Wabi Sabi Farm, if they would be able to help. They did not hesitate to offer assistance. Sue is a grower of organic herbs and perennials and had a greenhouse available, so she was able to keep Rocky and May in their heated greenhouse on cold nights at a steady 55°. This allowed Rocky to focus all his energy on gaining weight without concern of cold temperatures or winter winds.

Rocky cried often for his mother; it was very sad to see. Sue and Ellen were able to get 30-34 ounces of milk and yogurt into Rocky every day. His weight was still fluctuating and he continued to be stressed because he still wanted his

mother.

During the time I was in Tennessee, Rocky was eating every day, his weight continued to fluctuate, but he seemed to be holding steady. Sue and Ellen kept a close eye to make sure his needs were met. Rocky maintained this condition up through Christmas Eve.

I returned from Tennessee on Christmas Eve. Christmas Day we went over to Wabi Sabi to take care of Rocky’s



Rocky with warm blanket

morning feeding; he was very shaky and could hardly walk. A healthy alpaca has a body temperature of 101°; Rocky’s body temperature was 97.8°! We called Colorado State University Veterinary Hospital and were told to get his temp

up and look for change in behavior. We brought Rocky to our house and began warming him. Larry sat in our family room rocking chair holding Rocky, while I brought him warm blankets from the dryer.

Later that morning, our granddaughters came running into the room to open



Rocky fell asleep Christmas morning.

their Christmas presents. Imagine their eyes when they saw Papa in the rocking chair with Rocky. They were more excited to have Rocky home than opening their presents! An alpaca in the house for Christmas — our kids tell us we are Red necks. We fed him and were able to get his body temperature up to 100°.

He fell asleep on our family room floor and Sydni laid her Christmas doll next to him while he slept. Around noon we took him back to Wabi Sabi. At 3:00 p.m. we went back for another feeding. His temp was falling again and he was noticeably weaker.

We took him back home and made a place in the small TV room for him. We warmed him up, fed him, and left him to rest while we ate Christmas dinner. After Christmas dinner, I tried to feed him but all he did was cough and choke.

At this point Larry and I decided to head for the CSU Veterinary Hospital. By the time we got there, about 7:30 pm, sepsis had set in and Rocky was dying. We laid him on the exam table but he didn’t have the strength to move. Dr. Bohnhoff was on duty that night. I asked him if he thought Rocky would live. He said he didn’t think so. I asked him what his chance of survival was and he thought maybe 10%. . . .to be continued

Editor’s Note:

This is part 1 of 2 taken from the book Alpaca King’s Rocky I. Part 2 will appear in our Fall/Winter edition of the Western Farm Ranch and Dairy Magazine.

PolyDome Announces New Improved Calf Housing

WARM CLIMATE FOR WARM ENVIRONMENT **NEW CONVERTIBLE FOR INDOOR USE** **NEW HIGH DOOR FOR USE WITH FENCE PANELS**

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Kim Wilson, Ivy Roberts Receive Fred Stout Experience Awards

Kim Wilson, Neosho, Mo., and Ivy M. Roberts, Mount Berry, Ga., have been selected as the 2010 recipients of the Fred Stout Experience Awards.

The award fund was created in 2000 in memory of Fred J. Stout Jr., Mt. Carmel, Ill., a lifelong Jersey breeder and member of the Jersey Marketing Service (JMS) staff from 1978 to 1997. Stout was instrumental in the growth of the company's marketing activities, and later added duties as a type evaluator and in customer field service for the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA).

Stout believed that the best learning experiences happen in the everyday world. These awards honor that conviction by providing financial support for on-farm and JMS internship experiences.

Previous recipients of the Fred Stout Experience Award are Tara Bohnert, Illinois (2003), Allison Waggoner, South Carolina (2004), Dan Bauer, Wisconsin (2005), Aaron Horst, Pennsylvania (2006), Jacob Pieper, Maryland (2007); Katie Albaugh, Maryland (2008); and Brady Core (2009).

2010 Award Recipient Kim Wilson

Kim Wilson started her eight-week internship with Jersey Marketing Service on May 10 assisting with the Illinois Invitational Sale. Her experience will include herd visits with JMS Manager Dan Bauer, working in the national Jersey headquarters, and traveling to Oregon to work on the crew for the 53rd National Heifer

Sale, June 26.

Wilson is a rising senior at Oklahoma State University, majoring in animal science with an option in livestock merchandising. She lives and works at the school's dairy cattle center, is a student supervisor and has assisted with research trials to evaluate calf starters. She was a member of the OSU dairy judging team that placed ninth in the 2009 national intercollegiate contest, and also the Neosho FFA team that was national champion in 2006.

Since 2002, she has exhibited Jersey, Holstein and Guernsey cattle from her family's herd at state and national exhibitions, plus The All American Jersey Shows. In 2009, she worked with the Mordale Jerseys show string at World Dairy Expo and the Royal Winter Fair.

Kim was recently elected vice president of the Oklahoma State Dairy Science Club, having served as secretary since 2008. She is also member of the student affiliate division of the American Dairy Science Association.

2010 Award Recipient Ivy Roberts

For her on-farm Stout Experience, Ivy M. Roberts will intern at the 700-cow Registered Jersey™ dairy owned by AJCA Director Bill Grammer and family near Sebring, Ohio.

Roberts will graduate in December 2010 from Berry College with a B.S. degree in animal science. She has a keen interest in genetics. Since 2006, she has worked with large animal and ET vets in different capacities, and

also worked at Barham Jersey Farm in Tennessee and Waverly Farm in Virginia. From February 2009 through graduation, she was the student CEO of the Berry Farms Genetic Enterprise, helping create and execute its business plan. For the past three years she has been very involved in organizing the embryo flush program and marketing embryos at Berry.

Selected for the inaugural class of Jersey Youth Academy in 2009, Roberts was also a member of Platinum and Silver award teams at the Southern Regional Dairy Challenge, and received a number of scholarships during her college years.

About the National Jersey Youth Program

The American Jersey Cattle Association, Reynoldsburg, Ohio, sponsors nine educational awards for Jersey youth. Scholarships are paid from permanent endowments administered by the association. Contributions to these funds are recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as 501(c)(3) tax deductible charitable gifts and may be made at any time during the year.

Applications for 2010-2011 academic scholarships are posted online at USJersey.com and must be submitted no later than July 1. Deadline to apply for the 2011 Stout Experience Awards is February 1 of next year.

For more information, visit USJersey.com, or contact Dr. Cherie L. Bayer, Director of Development, at (614) 322-4456 or email cbayer@usjersey.com

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Ostrich Is Flying High!

By: Patrick G. McFadden President, American Ostrich Association

Many of you probably remember the “Get Rich Quick in the Ostrich Business” blitz in the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Proven pairs of breeder birds were selling for \$30,000 to \$60,000, eggs were selling for \$1000 each with no guarantee of fertility, and chicks were selling for a thousand dollars for each month of age. There was a lot of money made by a few and a lot of money lost by many. When the market went down, it really crashed. Many were getting rid of their birds however they could. The main

It must be noted that ostrich has one of the highest growth-to-feed ratios of any animal and can be processed at one year or less. The demand for ostrich meat has grown steadily over the past ten years to where the supply is lagging far behind. We growers in the United States cannot even satisfy the demand from the U.S. The increase in the appeal for ostrich meat is due to the heightened awareness of health and nutrition. More and more people are giving up foods which are loaded with fat and switching to more healthful alternatives. The fact that os-

skin and burns as well as a many other maladies such as psoriasis, eczema, and ichthyosis vulgaris (fish scales disease).

Ostrich leather is truly superior to other leathers. Who has not heard of “ostrich skin boots?” This is the toughest hide you can buy and also the most beautiful. It is a unique leather. The pattern of the quill marks is like a fingerprint – every skin is different. A variety of articles from the leather are made in many colors, and each one is highly admired.

With these products to market, one can see that this can be a profitable business. Like any business, the prices paid for the products fluctuate with supply and demand. Growing ostrich is a livestock project like any other and can blend well with other agricultural projects. Many growers also have cattle, pigs, crops, etc., to diversify their operations. Do not plan on getting rich quickly in the ostrich business, but it can be a substantial addition to your farm or ranch. It must be noted that there are six different processes involved in the ostrich business and each one or combination of several can be included in your operation –you do not have to do all of them.

1. Keeping breeder birds and getting fertile eggs is the first in the list of processes. One must know how to take care of adult ostriches so they will produce good, strong, and lively chicks. The feed ration, the size and shape of the pen, the available shelter, and the water supply are some of the factors to consider.

2. Hatching the chicks from the eggs is the next process. It is completely different from all other processes and probably the most technical. It is a process that many in the business find the most fulfilling. Even though the ostrich egg is huge, it is almost unbelievable that a new chick, nearly as big as a full grown chicken, could have been in that egg shell.

3. Next on the list is raising that new chick to about two or three months old. Proper care and nutrition are required to keep them healthy and growing at the correct rate.

4. At about two or three months of age, the chicks are transferred to the grow-out pen. Again the proper nutrition is important. A bird must have not only grain and other organic foods, but also optimum amounts of minerals and vitamins. These “grow-out” birds must have plenty of room in their pens to run and exercise.

5. The next process is the slaughter. This should be performed by a processing plant that is specifically equipped for ostrich. Ostrich meat sold to the public is now required by law to be USDA inspected.

6. The last process is probably the most difficult for most farmers – marketing.

There is an increasing number of brokers around the country who deal with ostrich meat, some exclusively. It may be in the best interest of the ostrich rancher to sell some products locally through farmers’ markets, meat markets, grocery stores, restaurants, etc. It is important for all of us in the business to promote our products.

An important fact to know: if you are thinking about getting started in the ostrich business, you are not alone. There is a lot of help from the American Ostrich Association that is free to AOA members. It is common knowledge among the AOA members that we are to help all other members with issues,

problems, and questions that may arise. We are not in competition with each other, we need each other. We need more growers and marketers to keep American ostrich products available to U.S. consumers, rather than having the products imported. Last year, more than 72,000 pounds of ostrich meat and more than 83,000 ostrich hides were imported into the United States.

When you buy “Certified American Ostrich” meat, leather, or oil, you know you are getting an ostrich product that was grown by a member of the American Ostrich Association, processed in the United States, and is free of any growth hormones or antibiotics. 



problem was there had not been a market established for the products of the ostrich, only for breeder birds. A few of us looked past the ostrich fad and saw the potential of the ostrich and stuck it out, creating a market for the three superior products that we get from the ostrich.

The first product is the meat. The meat of the ostrich is all red meat and is extremely low in fat and cholesterol, but high in iron and omega 3 fatty acids. The ostrich has no breast bone, so it does not get the white meat like chicken or turkey. The meat comes from the back, the sides, and the legs. A ten month old bird weighing two hundred fifty pounds will yield about seventy-five pounds of meat.

trich meat is delicious and can be substituted for other red meats makes it an easy transition for meal preparation.

The second superior product from ostrich is the oil. Since the fat on the ostrich does not marble in the meat (it is in layers between the meat and the hide), it is easily removed during the butchering process. The fat is then rendered and processed into wonderful oil for our skin that has been used since the time of Cleopatra. It has been found that ostrich oil is almost identical to human oil in molecular size and it therefore absorbs quickly and thoroughly into the skin. As we get older, we do not produce as much oil; thus, ostrich oil is a great substitute for human oil. It is especially helpful for dry

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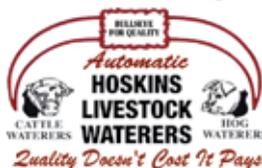
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