

## Wood Bricks Made From Scrap Lumber

Larry and Steve Miller recycle wood scraps into 2-lb., 2 by 4 by 6 1/2-in. bricks for heating.

"They're more dense than logs. They won't float," says Larry Miller, a Shipshewana, Ind., entrepreneur who started production of GrenHeat bricks early this year with Steve.

There's a plentiful supply of hardwood scraps in the area from factories and other sources. The Millers started looking for a way to recycle them. They researched briquette machines and selected one from Ruf, a German company.

They buy hardwood chips and shavings. "The finer the product, the more dense the bricks," Miller explains. The material is augered into the Ruf machine, where resins in the wood and 160 tons of pressure compress it into brick form.

"You can throw one onto cement and it won't break," Miller says.

Each brick puts out 17,000 btu's.

"These get extremely hot and are identi-

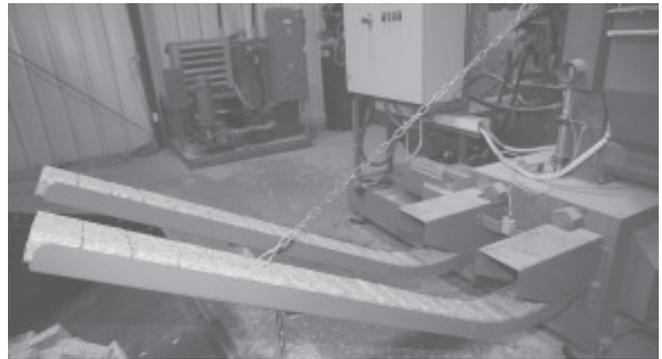
cal in size and dryness, from 5 to 8 percent moisture content," Miller says. "I have an add-on stove. I usually put in 12 bricks overnight, and in the morning I still have red coals," he says. Customers need to experiment what works best in their own stoves. It's important to be able to shut down or control the stove or furnace because they burn so hot.

The bricks can also be used in fireplaces, but they shouldn't be placed too close to glass doors as the bricks expand as they burn.

"It's a clean product," Miller notes. "They're all-natural, raw scrap wood material with no additives. It works great in fireplaces, campfires, and some restaurants use it for cooking."

The Millers sell skids of 1,000 bricks, which equal the btu's of a cord of wood. The skid of blocks is a lot smaller and can be placed in a garage or basement. There are no bugs and only 2 1/2 gallons of ash/skid.

The Millers wholesale wood bricks to dealers. The bricks retail for about \$225 to \$250 for 1,000 bricks. Dealers also sell smaller lots.



Larry and Steve Miller use a briquette machine from Germany to make densely-packed wood bricks from scrap lumber.

Call the Millers for dealers in the region or if you're interested in becoming a dealer.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Larry Miller or Steve Miller, GrenHeat, LLC, 1065 N. 625 W., Shipshewana, Ind. 46565 (ph 260 768-7519).



## Cheese Factory Housed In Retired Reefers

When Jules Wesselink and his family started their farm-made Gouda cheese business in 1996, they had a number of challenges to overcome.

The biggest problem was that construction of a traditional building would've meant purchasing an extremely expensive building permit. Authorities in that area discourage development in an effort to protect the habitat of an endangered species of rat. So the family decided to set up their business in a retired refrigerator truck. The fact that it sits on wheels meant that no building permit was needed.

The Wesselinks spent a full year researching the cheese business, including a fact-finding trip to Holland and plenty of practice making two 2-lb. cheeses at a time for family and friends to enjoy.

After launching the business, they gradually added more reefers, until the family is now using nine units altogether. Because the reefers sit "above ground," they don't interfere with habitat, and make it much more difficult for the endangered rodents to interfere

with cheese making.

The "retired" reefer units cost between \$2,000 and \$5,000 each. All had their refrigeration units removed already.

"The Department of Motor Vehicles considers these reefers to be non-operational because they're stationary, but we receive paperwork each year, reminding us that if we do start using them on the roads we have to pay registration fees," Thomas says.

The family positioned the 8 by 45-ft. reefers up against each other, in two sets of four, and cut out the walls between a couple of them to make one big room and put smaller access doors into the other trailers.

They installed an electric refrigeration unit at the end of each trailer, with supplemental ceiling fans to circulate air. The cold box compartment is kept the coolest, at 38 degrees.

The refrigeration system required an investment of about \$30,000.

The family spent an additional \$40,000 to build a steel roof on a wooden frame over the entire block of trailers.

The ninth trailer sits off to the side but is connected to the others with a 5-ft. long covered catwalk. This space is used for general storage of boxes, etc., and occasionally for chilling.

"These reefers were definitely the most economical way we could have done this, and they've allowed us to keep adding on as needed," Wesselink says.

The family makes their cheeses from fresh, whole milk and ages it for a minimum of two months.

"Up until about two years ago, we milked our own cows," Wesselink points out. "Since then, we've been purchasing milk from the dairy farm next door to us."

They only make cheese three days a week, with one 750-lb. batch made on each of those days. It takes about 200 cows to produce enough milk for their needs on each of those days.

"We make our cheese by hand so it's a slow process," she says. "We make 2-lb. and 12-lb. round Gouda wheels in a variety of flavors, and we employ eight people."



Cheese making business is set up in a series of retired refrigerator trucks. This 45-ft. trailer is used as an aging room.

They get orders from all over the U.S. via their website. They sell both wholesale and retail, and also have an on-farm store to sell direct. Winchester Cheese Company also offers scheduled tours of the operation.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Winchester Cheese Co., 32605 Holland Rd., Winchester, Calif. 92596 (ph 951 926-4239; fax 951 926-3349; sales@winchestercheese.com; www.winchestercheese.com).

## They Love Their "Large Black Pigs"

Nigel and Sue Parsons of Saanichton, B.C., love their rare pigs. The breed is most commonly referred to as Large Black Pigs, but are also sometimes called "Lop-Eared Blacks" or "Elephant Pigs."

"The reason for the nickname is that when piglets are born, they have huge, floppy black ears, and look a lot like little black elephants," she explains.

Rare Breeds Canada, a "watchdog" organization that works to save "heritage breeds," says Large Blacks are endangered. The American Livestock Breed Conservancy (ALCB) considers them critically endangered, with fewer than 200 annual registrations in the U.S. and an estimated global population of less than 2,000.

According to ALBC's website, the breed was developed in England. In 1899, a breed society was formed. There were a few Canadian imports of Large Blacks in the 1920's, but the breed has never been numerous in North America.

The Parsons family bought their breeding stock (1 sow and 1 boar) from a breeder in Alberta two years ago, and have since

raised seven purebred piglets, 11 crossbred piglets, and another purebred litter is due very soon. Due to strong demand, all of these have been pre-sold.

"Large Blacks are always black and those big ears that hang down over their eyes like blindfolds. They can't see well because of the ears so they're very docile," Sue says. "The average purebred litter tends to be between 6 and 10 piglets, but crossbreds always seem to produce significantly more."

Large Blacks' coat color makes it tolerant of many sun-born illnesses, and its hardiness and grazing ability make it an efficient meat producer. The breed is also known for its mothering ability and milk capacity.

These pigs are characterized by great length and depth of body, making them ideal for lean pork and bacon production. They have long heads with straight faces.

"They also make very good pets because they're so easy to handle," Parsons explains. "One of the young gilts I sold has been trained by her new owners to sit, lie down and come on command." Parsons' main motivation for keeping Large Blacks is that she wants to help



Large Black Pigs are sometimes called "elephant pigs" because when they're born, they have huge, floppy black ears and look a lot like little black elephants.

preserve the breed.

She sells her registered Large Blacks for \$400 (Can.) each. Commercial meat hogs for \$150.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Happy

Acres Farm, Nigel and Sue Parsons, 7485 Wallace Dr., Saanichton, B.C., Canada V8M 1V8 (ph 250 544-1788; happiest@shaw.ca; www.rarebreeds-canada.ca or www.albc-usa.org).