

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: editor@farmshow.com.

Topsy Farms covers the cost of feeding orphan lambs by charging people \$75 to adopt a lamb. They also charge visits \$20 per half hour to visit and play with lambs.



Farm Saves Orphan Lambs By Charging People To Adopt

Topsy Farms in Ontario, Canada sells a variety of wool and meat products from their sheep flock (featured in Vol. 45, No. 3). But one of its more unique "products" is a lamb adoption program that helps cover the costs of orphaned lambs that need bottle feeding.

"We started the adoption program about 6 years ago," explains Murray. "We raised the price each year, but left it at \$75 this year. Our first 25 sold out in the first 6 hrs., and we had another 20 on the waiting list."

Foster "parents" are encouraged to come to the farm for lamb cuddling and feeding. "We set up half hour times for people to come and hang out with their lamb," says Murray. "Some came 4 or 5 times a year."

They also have a program to allow those without a foster lamb of their own to spend a half hour cuddling and playing with the lambs. The cost is \$20 and they're allowed to bring family and friends.

"People love to get out of the city and spend time on the farm," says Murray. "There is something about the degree of calmness required when sitting with lambs that is special."

The farm received letters from visitors describing their time with lambs as transformational.

Ironically, the pandemic may prove to be lifesaving for the farm's lambs. The lack of visitors for the past year (all adoptions were "virtual") has improved the health of the flock. As a result, the rules of engagement

will be different when stay-at-home orders are lifted.

"With regular feeding times, we had very few cases of scours," says Murray. "In the future there will be specific time slots for feeding."

Visitors are asked to not wear shoes worn on other farms. Lamb cuddling and feeding areas are separate from the larger flock to reduce disease transmission concerns.

"We consider biosecurity to be the number one concern and not just for the animals," says Murray. "We had a run of contagious pustular dermatitis in the flock. The blisters around the mouth area are ugly and gross, but run their course in about 10 days. However, pregnant women can pick it up from the amniotic fluid with negative consequences. With farm visitors, you have to stay on top of whatever disease might be transmissible to people, as well as what they might track onto the farm."

Labor is another concern with agritourism, adds Murray. "Be sure you have enough staff, so everything runs smoothly," she says. "On days that are fully booked, we have one staff person with people and lambs at all times, as well as a traffic control person to greet people and take care of those just dropping in."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Topsy Farms, 14775 Front Rd., Stella, Ont. Canada K0H 2S0 (ph 613 389-3444, toll-free 888 287-3157; info@topsyfarms.com; www.topsyfarms.com).

Direct Marketing Saved Wagyu Producer

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

"You need to taste some of our meat," said Wagyu cattle feeder Brad Feddersen when FARM SHOW contacted him for this story. Three days later 3 steaks arrived. He was right. This writer had to taste the meat to appreciate how those steaks could be worth from \$60 to \$80 retail. It melts in your mouth.

Getting customers to "try some" is how the Feddersens rescued their beef operation from disaster.

"In February, 2020, we were selling our beef through a broker, who sold to top scale restaurants nationwide," says Feddersen. "A 1,600-lb. animal could sell for \$8,000 to \$12,000. When the restaurants closed, our broker didn't pay us for half of the last 30 head we sold him."

The timing was bad. The Feddersens and his parents Larry and Marge custom-fed cattle for a Texas Wagyu breeder from 1997 until 2017. Larry developed a low stress handling and feeding regimen for the easily stressed Japanese breed.

In 2017 Brad and his wife, Shawna, purchased a small herd of purebred Wagyu and also began buying feeder calves from purebred Wagyu breeders in Texas, South Dakota and Alabama.

It takes Wagyu cattle more than 2 1/2 years to reach market weight. This meant the Feddersens had just started selling their own beef as the pandemic hit. One of the first things he did was to stop buying calves for the feedlot.

He started working with local lockers to process his beef and small brokers to get his beef in the hands of consumers.

It was family and friends that began to turn things around. One buddy had a walk-in freezer for sale. Another knew a guy in refrigeration who could help move it and set it up. Soon they had a salesroom on the farm. "We had it inspected and approved," says Feddersen.

Shawna set up a website and by mid-2020, they were online and selling their Wagyu beef across the country. Sales got a boost in November when they won reserve grand champion at the Wagyu breeders Triple Crown Steak Challenge.

Feddersen bought a freezer trailer, which they take to pop-up markets.

"We give away free samples and educate potential customers to the benefits of Wagyu



Feddersen Wagyu raises and sells their beef through markets and also through Fareway grocery stores.

beef at our booth inside," says Feddersen. "Our daughter takes orders and our son helped fill orders. We sold \$120,000 worth of meat in our first 5 Saturdays."

Many of those who bought at the market started buying at Feddersen's farm store or ordering online. Word spread.

Feddersen admits he was surprised how much local demand there was and how many buyers turned into repeat customers. It was grass roots marketing at its best.

When Feddersen asked Midwest grocery chain Fareway Foods to try his meat, they asked for a tour of the farm.

"We had close to 100 people at the farm when the Fareway CEO and the other executives showed up," says Feddersen. "We wanted them to meet everyone we work with, from the guys who help on horseback with the cattle, the truck driver, our vet, our implement dealer and the guys who cut up our meat."

The good news for Feddersen is that the tour was a success. Fareway now sells his beef at 122 locations as well as online. The bad news was that he needed to close his online store with one exception.

"We told the Fareway executives that we would never stop selling to the people who kept us going," says Feddersen. "They kept us alive when we started selling off the farm."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Feddersen USA Wagyu, P.O. Box 302, Anthon, Iowa 51004 (ph 712 490-6763; feddersenusawagyu@gmail.com; www.ilovewagyu.com).



Farm Marketing Solutions offers different materials to help with planning and understanding budgeting and the costs involved with small farming operations.

How To Boost Small Farm Profits

John Suscovich provides advice on raising pastured chickens profitably. His common-sense advice on the chicken business often applies to other ag ventures as well.

While Suscovich's actual time farming

has been relatively brief, beginning in 2011, it has been intense. While working as farm manager of what has become Kent Farm Brewery, he has raised as many as 2,400 broilers in a season, as well as pigs, sheep,

hops, apples, herbs, and vegetables on the 52-acre Connecticut farm. A key message, he states, is that a number of those ventures failed.

"I had endless enthusiasm and passion, but I lacked a clear direction. I took on more than I could manage and spread myself too thin across multiple operations. In this way, I made farming more difficult and wasted time, money, and energy."

One place he continues to invest time and energy is his Farm Marketing Solutions, a multi-media publishing company. It includes more than 650 videos, his Growing Farms Podcast, and several, self-published, how-to workbooks that he sells on his website.

What sets Suscovich apart from most advice givers is his business-first approach. He consistently stresses establishing budgets and tracking costs.

His YouTube video "\$4.44 Difference Raising Cornish Cross VS Red Ranger Chickens" is a prime example. Using an easy-to-follow whiteboard, he goes over labor, feed and pros and cons of the breeds. Near the end of the video, he sums up his thinking behind his materials, "...you've got

to know the numbers if you're going to stay in business."

Another thing to be appreciated with Suscovich's materials is an emphasis on outside resources. He didn't develop all of the ideas he shares by himself, and a number of his videos are interviews with other small farmers. He is building on the work of many others, tempered by his own experiences.

The self-published workbooks range from \$13.99 for his Stress Free Chicken Tractor Plans to \$97 for his 292-page, Pastured Poultry Packet #2. The latter includes marketing strategies, marketing materials, marketing campaign examples, what to do with social media and more. The \$50 Pastured Poultry Packet #1 offers a step-by-step planning guide for the costs of raising broilers on grass, whether for a business or for a family.

Suscovich's videos are free on his YouTube channel.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, (hello@farmmarketingsolutions.com; www.farmmarketingsolutions.com; [facebook.com/FarmMarketingSolutions/](https://www.facebook.com/FarmMarketingSolutions/)).