

Match-Maker Group Turns Rural Singles Into Couples

Danny Webber (not his real name) is a 25-year-old attractive, honest, hardworking bachelor from the Jamestown, N. Dak., area. He describes himself as easygoing and says he loves animals and the outdoors. He would not mind settling down with a wife, but at the moment he does not even date.

Why not, you wonder? Well, he lives and works on a farm, that's why.

According to Webber and many others like him, if you live in the country, there are slim pickings when it comes to finding a potential mate. "Once you are out of high school, it's hard to meet anyone new," says Webber. "About the only thing you can do is go into town to bars and hope to meet someone by chance."

Although the rural dating scene can be bleak, hope is on the horizon for Webber and others like him willing to reach out. Singles in Agriculture is a national non-profit organization that recognizes this problem and seeks to remedy it. Singles from a rural background can join the club for the opportunity to meet others of a similar background.

Marcy Gahm, the club president from Pearl City, Ill., claims that at least 75 couples have met and married since the group was

formed in 1986. "We have a 'singles no more' album filled with pictures and souvenirs from people who met through the club and got married," she explains. "Of course, not everyone gets in touch with us to let us know, but if we hear of a marriage, we try to track it down and document it for the record," she says.

Marcy herself is a bona fide "single no more", having married Marlyn, the club treasurer. She was a cattle rancher's widow living in Stacyville, Iowa, looking for someone to share her life and love of the land. Marlyn was a perennial bachelor, raising cattle on a 300-acre farm in Pearl City.

Their relationship began through letters. Then they agreed to meet halfway between their two towns. It was love at first sight, according to Marcy, and wedding bells rang a few months later in 1987.

Marcy guesses the club currently has somewhere between 650 and 700 members from across the country. Basic membership is only \$20 annually. This entitles a person to voting privileges and to receive fliers on all club activities, an ID card and the quarterly newsletter. For an additional \$15, the members are put into a directory with a

photo and paragraph about themselves.

Everyone entered into the directory also receives a copy of it in order to contact anyone that sparks their interest. Members who do not want their address published can pay another \$15 for confidentiality. All correspondence directed to them will then be forwarded through the club's main office.

Marcy asserts that Singles in Agriculture has high moral standards; a member who has had complaints made against him or her could be voted out by the board. "We cannot screen everyone who joins, but we do expect a certain amount of integrity from our members," she says.

"People who join do so because they are looking for someone who understands the schedule of farming and loves that kind of lifestyle," says Marcy. "A lot of people assume it's mostly men out there on the farms, but we have a surprisingly large number of women who drive tractors, plant and harvest, and take care of animals," she says. "They want a guy who will understand their life."

The sex distribution of members leans slightly toward women, but attendance at club activities is usually pretty evenly distributed, according to Marcy. "As far as age, we have some younger people in their early 20's but we get most of our membership from the late 20's through 65."

Although the main motivation for joining Singles in Agriculture is to meet members of the opposite sex, Marcy says a lot of people just like to have the opportunity to meet others with the same background.

Elvina Allan of York, N. Dak., has been a club member for two years. She says she is not necessarily looking for a husband through the group, but rather joined for friendship. "I'm not against getting married," she says, "but I enjoy just meeting new people and starting new friendships."

Marge Ann Paulson of Clear Lake, S. Dak., says she joined the club last year because she has a definite preference for men from a farming background. "I enjoy people from a lot of different backgrounds," she says, "but it seems like those from farms have good character."

Once-a-month club activities give people a way to meet each other in person. "Members can offer to host a weekend activity such as camping or boating or whatever they want to put together," says Marcy. "The weekend is usually planned to have a number of activities."

People wanting to join Singles in Agriculture, or just wanting to learn more about the organization, can write to Singles in Agriculture, 5297 Illinois Road 73 S., Pearl City, Ill. 61062.

Reprinted from REC Magazine, Mandan, N. Dak.



Miniature thresher feeds straw into hopper on top of mini baler that makes 6-in. bales.

MAKES BALES 6 IN. LONG

Miniature Straw Baler

"I hooked a baler and thresher together like this in real life, too," says Joseph Balsam, Fayetteville, Penn., who attracts lots of attention at threshers' reunions with his mini thresher and straw baler, hooked together in tandem and driven by a mini steam-powered tractor.

Balsam built all three functioning mini machines. The self-feeding thresher has a working 4-in. cylinder. Straw feeds out the back of the thresher into a hopper on a small square baler, which compacts it into 2 1/4 by 3 by 6-in. bales.

Years ago when Balsam worked as a custom thresher, he used a similar set-up. "I was the only custom thresher around who left the farm with all the grain threshed and all the straw baled. Horsemen, in particular, liked the bales I made because there was no chaff in them. I blew it out," says Balsam.

Balsam's mini steam tractor, which operates on 130 psi compressed air, belt-drives

the thresher which in turn powers the baler. He built all three machines from scratch so they're virtually identical to the original machines. The double cylinder tractor has a 1 in. bore with a 2 1/2 in. stroke. It's 30 in. long, 14 in. wide., and 22 in. high. Weighs 120 lbs.

The baler is 36 in. long, 15 in. wide, 12 in. high and weighs 40 lbs.

The working cylinder in the thresher cylinder feeds grain to an 8-in. wide separator that's 48 in. long. A 22-in. long conveyor out the back carries straw to the baler. The thresher's also fitted with an automatic grain weigh hopper.

Other mini machine projects include a sawmill that actually mills small logs and a scale model cider mill.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joseph R. Balsam, 220 Bobwhite Trail, Fayetteville, Penn. 17222 (ph 717 352-7419).

THEY THRIVE ON GRASS

African Guinea Hogs Make Great Pets

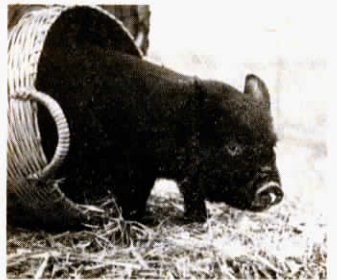
"They make great pets because they're intelligent, have a gentle nature, and love people," says Gary Spencer, Webster, N.Y., about his rare African guinea hogs.

Guinea hogs are unusual because of their small size and unlike most hogs they prefer grazing for food rather than rooting. They're about the same size as Vietnamese potbellied pigs and come in two types - small-boned and big-boned. At full maturity the small-boned type is 20 to 22 in. tall and weighs up to 125 lbs. The big-boned type range is 30 to 36 in. tall and weighs up to 300 lbs. Both types have a shiny black coat and small pointed ears.

"From a distance they look like small cows grazing in the grass," says Spencer, who owns nine purebred guinea hogs and has started a registry for purebred members of the species. "They're good pets because they won't root up a lawn when it's dry, but you have to watch them after a rain because they'll dig it up when it's wet."

"They were originally brought into the U.S. for the lard they carry. They have very little meat. The big-boned variety can weigh up to 400 lbs. if overfed so they must be limit fed and allowed to exercise. They can withstand cold temperatures in unheated facilities and can survive solely on forage. I feed them alfalfa pellets and pig chow which has 8 to 10% protein. They like anything sweet, especially ice cream. They smack their lips and savor the flavor."

"Guinea hogs most likely originated along the Guinea Coast of Africa," says Spencer.



Spencer bought his guinea hogs from a man in the southern U.S. whose family had owned guinea hogs for 80 years.

"They were distributed over much of the world when they traveled on slave ships from Africa to England, France, Spain, and America. They were common as homestead pigs in the southern U.S. where they flourished because they were hardy grazers and foragers that could be raised on minimal pasture. When the demand for pork increased, farmers crossed the little guinea hogs with other, larger species, and the pure bloodlines were diluted. Today, they're practically unknown although many people own crossbreeds."

Spencer sells males for \$600 and females for \$800.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gary Spencer, 518 Lakeview Terrace, Webster, N.Y. 14580 (ph 716 671-3062).