



Restaurants charge up to \$100 a pound for the meat from Nicholson's wild boars.

**"TASTES LIKE PORK WITH A BEEFY FLAVOR"**

## Minnesota Farmer Raises Wild Boars

Wild boars, frequently raised for big game hunting preserves, also can be raised for meat, says Darrel Nicholson, an "alternative farmer" who's raising them on his New York Mills, Minn., farm.

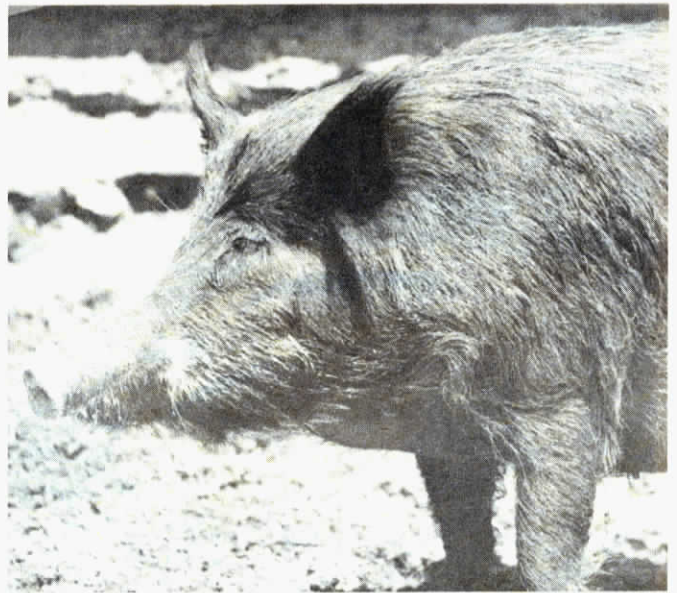
Nicholson raises about 50 head per year in a 25-acre "fenced off" field with a couple of buildings for shelter. He sells wild boars, whole dressed or by the pound, to specialty restaurants throughout the upper Midwest. The restaurants offer fresh or cured meat, and up to 7 different types of sausage. They charge up to \$100 per pound for the meat.

"Wild boar meat tastes like pork with a

beefy flavor," says Nicholson, who adds that there's a growing demand for exotic animal meat because people believe it contains no feed additives.

Nicholson feeds the animals cracked barley and oats, screenings, alfalfa, and vegetables like squash and potatoes. But no corn. "Corn makes wild boars fat and causes their meat to taste like ordinary pork."

"Feed efficiency for wild boars is poor," notes Nicholson. "Typically, it takes six months for domestic hogs to reach a 230 lb. market weight, but it takes wild boars 1 1/2 years. Market prices are about three times



Adult wild boars are black and reach a market weight of 350 to 500 lbs. in 1 1/2 years.

higher, but so are production costs."

Adult wild boars are black, measuring 5 ft. long with a shoulder height of 2 1/2 ft. Most weigh about 350 lbs. but can grow to 500 lbs. or more.

The pigs are heavy in front and lean in the rear - the opposite of domestic hogs. They have a long, pointed head with a long snout for rooting, and ears that stand stiffly upright. "Their sense of hearing and smell is excellent, but they have poor eyesight," says Nicholson. "When cornered, they fight ferociously, and they're fast and agile. I once had a sow that cleared an 8 ft. fence." Wild boars have small litters of 4 or 5 pigs. Their canine teeth develop into long ivory tusks which curve outward and can reach a length of 9 in.

According to Nicholson, who has written a book called "Wild Boars", there are 3

types of wild pigs: Eurasian wild boars, feral hogs (wild domesticated pigs), and razorbacks, which are a cross of the two. "In the U.S., most wild pigs that look like wild boars are actually razorbacks. There are only about 5,000 free-ranging wild boars."

Nicholson doesn't raise and sell breeding stock, but he can provide information on how to get started raising wild boars. "There's no general clearinghouse of information on breeding stock," he says. "But there are a variety of ways to obtain breeding stock, including through big game hunting preserves and exotic animal sales."

Nicholson's book sells for \$12.95. For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Darrel Nicholson, P.O. Box 357, New York Mills, Minn. 56567.

## Animal Scientists Create Strange-Looking "Geeps"

What do you get when you cross a sheep with a goat?

You get a strange-looking creature called a "Geep" with the face of a goat and the body of a sheep.

Animal Scientist Dr. Gary Anderson and his colleagues at the University of California - Davis Campus (UCD) have created Geeps by taking cells from a 7-day old goat embryo and inserting them into a 7-day old sheep embryo, then implanting the joint embryo into a ewe's womb.

The first sheep-goat Geep in the U.S., named Duchess, was born at UCD in the spring of 1985. Dr. Anderson, a reproductive physiologist, prefers to call her and similar other creations "Chimeras" rather than "Geeps." In Greek mythology, Chimeras were monstrous animals - part serpent, part lion and part goat. Dr. Anderson's Chimeras, or Geeps, are neither horrible nor ugly and have no abnormal body parts or shapes.

In the sheep-goat combination, the goat genetic traits are expressed by straight hair and dark face coloration. The most dominant sheep trait is an outer covering of curly wool.

"The goal of our research is to learn more

about preserving endangered animal species," notes Dr. Anderson. "The sheep/goat Chimera provides a model for studying the role of the placenta in preventing immune rejection of the fetus. This is important because researchers are interested in using domestic or non-endangered species as surrogate mothers to carry the embryos of endangered animals."

Last June, in a test of her reproductive capabilities, Duchess acted as a surrogate mother and gave birth to a lamb whose fertilized egg had been transplanted into her womb by Dr. Anderson in February. Now mother and lamb share a pen.

Dr. Anderson is seeking to breed Duchesses to a ram to prove that she ovulates and can produce her own young, which would be a lamb. Someday, he hopes to breed her to a buck to see if she produces goat eggs and can give birth to a kid. She will never be able to produce a Geep unless Dr. Anderson specifically places a Geep embryo in her womb.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dr. Gary Anderson, Dept. of Animal Science, University of California, Davis, Cal. 95616 (ph 916 752-1250).



"Geep" has a combination of straight hair and curly wool. The head is shaped like a sheep but the dark face is characteristic of goats.