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## CUDDLY EXOTICS NATIVE TO AFRICA

# “Hobby” Foxes Make Great House Pets

“They’re cute and make fantastic house pets,” says Ron DeArmond, Grand River, Iowa, about the Fennec foxes he started raising last spring.

DeArmond, who’s a broker and importer of exotic animals, has just two pairs of Fennec foxes but says he plans to have as many as 16 by next year. He bought his first pair last spring as pups from a domestic breeder and recently imported another pair from Egypt during a 45-day grace period.

Fennec foxes are native to North Africa and to the Middle East, where their habitat is being destroyed. They weigh about 3 lbs. and are sand-colored, with big ears, long legs, and a small head. They’re a desert animal that preys on insects, rodents, reptiles, and sometimes eats plants. They can dig very quickly to catch prey or escape an enemy.

“Fennec foxes have been in the U.S. for 15 or 20 years, but there are only about 300 pairs in the U.S. - not nearly enough to meet demand,” says DeArmond. “They’re great with kids. My wife and I don’t have to worry about leaving them with our 3-year-old daughter. They’re full of energy and chase each other around the furniture for hours. If you’re in their way, they’ll run right over you without missing a stride.

“They’re smaller than a Chihuahua

dog. When fully grown they reach just above the ankle. They have a small, bushy tail similar to an ordinary fox, but not as thick furred. They can leap through the air as gracefully as a gazelle and have excellent hearing because their big ears work like little satellite dishes.

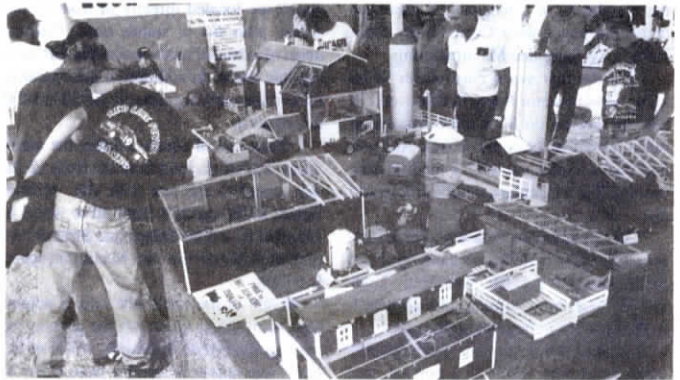
“We let one pair run around the house as pets. They can easily be litter box trained and will even allow us to wash them with soap and dry them off with a hair blower. We feed them cat and dog food, and small amounts of vegetables. They really like raisins - they’ll dance on their hind feet for one. They also love grapes on the vine.

“They don’t breed well in a house so we plan to move them outdoors. Females breed at 8 to 12 months, and average gestation period is 54 to 60 days. Average litter size is two to four. You can get two litters per year if you bottle raise them or one litter per year if you raise them naturally. We’ll trade some of the offspring we get next year for breeding animals. We’ll keep one of the males indoors for a pet.”

DeArmond says he plans to sell the kits for \$2,000 each.

For more information on Fennec foxes, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, J & R Exotic Animals, 118 Adams, Grand River, Iowa 50108 (ph 515 773-5548).

# FARM SHOW



Schwabke's prize-winning toy barn was the cornerstone of the model farm displayed at a recent farm show.

## HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW MANY PIECES ARE IN DETAILED FARM REPLICA

# Model Farm Started With One Toy Barn

When he was 8 years old, Roy Schwabke saw a toy barn that fascinated him so much he knew one day he'd build one of his own.

Now, more than a half a century later, Schwabke is making the rounds at Midwestern farm shows with a farm replica that includes his prize-winning toy barn and a whole lot more.

“Nobody knows how many pieces are in it because we keep adding things here and there,” says the 72-year-old Schwabke, a retired Wisconsin farmer.

“This replica is set up the way I'd like to have a farm if I was still farming,” Schwabke says. Built to 1/16-in. scale, the 18 1/2-ft. long by 8-ft. wide replica “more or less covers the 1970's on up.” The only parts of the display that aren't hand-made are the 31 toy tractors, he adds.

The project started about seven years ago when Schwabke built the barn. It features an electrically operated, working bale elevator. Six years ago, Schwabke entered the barn in the Green County fair toy exhibit where it won a blue ribbon. That gave Schwabke the bug to build an entire farm from odds and ends he had around.

Soon, he added a house designed by his wife, Wauneda, and decorated by his daughter. It even has vinyl siding.

Next came a machine shed.

Now the farmstead also features a silo with electrically operated silage unloaders, grain augers and dryer that actually blows hot air. (Schwabke used an old hair dryer mounted underneath the hand-made grain dryer.) Also, the windmill's pumpjack is fully operative, thanks to a motor out of a junked VCR. The farm's light poles are made from old pool cues and lights are out of the dashboard of a junked car.

The numerous working parts all operate electrically using transformers, relays and time delay relays, notes Schwabke's son-in-law Paul Heimann. The farm is spread out on a table that sits atop six sawhorses. It folds in the middle for transport.

Schwabke says none of the display was particularly difficult to make. “It all seemed to come pretty easily,” he says. “The good Lord had a hand in it, I suppose.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Roy Schwabke, P.O. Box 204, Juda, Wis., 53550 (ph 608 934-5377).



## Uhnken Poses With His Home-Built Machines

Over the years FARM SHOW has probably had more stories on “made it myself” machines built by Illinois farmer Butch Uhnken than just about anyone else. Most were written up by veteran farm writer C.F. Marley of Nokomis, Ill. Marley recently paid a visit to Uhnken's farm near Jacksonville and snapped this picture of Uhnken with some of his creations. Uhnken's sitting on his home-built ATV in the foreground. Behind him are his loader tractor, a self-propelled rope wick applicator, a self-propelled mower, a sprayer with a 48-ft. boom mounted on a converted pickup, a field mower built on the frame of a Deere 77 combine, and a self-propelled grain cart that'll carry a whopping 900 bu. of grain.