

New Ways To Make Money On The Farm

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.

Market Growing For Weed-Killing Goats

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

Using large herds of goats to combat weeds is an idea that's catching on fast and providing a lucrative new business opportunity for anyone willing to live a nomadic lifestyle.

Lani Malmberg spends most of her time traveling around the West with her herd of 1,300 Cashmere goats. She lives in a camper and trucks her goats from one job to the next. She has so many jobs lined up she has started helping other "goat entrepreneurs" get started in the business.

"It's catching on fast because the public is demanding less use of chemicals. It's also economical," she says. "So far I've worked in 10 states, charging between 50 cents and \$2 per day per goat, plus transportation and fencing costs. It works out to about \$60 per acre on average. I am currently training people in five states how to get started," she notes.

"Goats not only kill weeds," she says, "They also fertilize, irrigate, and recycle. They will eat just about anything, including yucca, thistle, Russian knapweed, salt cedar, poison hemlock, leafy spurge, kudzu, poison ivy, cactus and all noxious weeds. Because of the way they chew, goats crush most of the plant seeds they eat, and this virtually eliminates regrowth."

Malmberg has a master's degree in weed science and started her goat-grazing business in 1997 with the help of her two sons. They both cashed in their college funds to assist in getting the operation started. The

business has been so successful the goats are now sending them to college.

Her clients include national parks, state parks, cities, counties, homeowners associations, and private individuals such as ranchers throughout the West.

On each job, a temporary electric fence keeps the goats from running off or eating what they shouldn't. It also keeps out predators. Typically, the herd works its magic on a parcel of between half an acre and 20 acres at a time, depending on the job. Malmberg also relies on her three Border collie dogs to maintain order and keep the herd moving.

Goats are ideal for weed and brush control because of their unique tastes. Their first preference is brush, leaves and twigs. After that, they'll turn to weeds and then, lastly, grass.

"Goats also poop a lot and, as they roam, their tough hooves stomp the pellets into the soil, fertilizing and helping to soften hard clay areas. They also irrigate, a pint at a time, with nitrogen-tinged urine that helps balance the minerals in the soil. And, most notably, they even eat plants that are poisonous to other animals. Powerful enzymes in a goat's saliva neutralize toxins so that the biggest threat it faces is eating itself to death. In addition, we often tie native grass seed packs onto goat pack saddles on their backs, so they can plant while grazing," she explains.

Cashmere wool from the sheep is a major source of income. She once sold unspun fiber for as much as \$20 an ounce at festival in



Lani Malmberg has had so much success with her goat herding, that she's now helping other "goat entrepreneurs" get into the business.



A herd of 1,300 goats can cover a 20-acre area at one time.

New Mexico. She also bags goat droppings for sale to organic farmers. When the herd is in one place for a while, she confines them in the same area each night so the droppings are easy to scoop up. She bags the manure in 35 lb. sacks and sells them for \$15 a sack.

Malmberg's sons still help her when they are not in college, and she has one employee. This allows her to accept numerous speak-

ing engagements where she is asked to explain the various advantages of her contract grazing business.

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Jelly Business Thrives In Farm Home

Kellie Sloat makes 59 varieties of jams and jellies in her farm home and sells out of a small store located in her basement. The business, called Yesterday's Kitchen, sells 3,000 to 4,500 jars of jams and jellies annually.

She started 13 years ago after being urged by her husband to "do something" with the wild plums that were growing on their property. When people raved about her jam, she started making more to sell on a small scale at craft shows and farmers' markets. The business kept growing from there, until she had a commercial kitchen built onto her home in 1996.

"I've found that I really enjoy pleasing the customer," says Sloat. "We still pick some of the fruit ourselves, but the rest of it comes from neighbors or local vendors. I have a license for commercial baking and use no artificial sweeteners or preservatives in any of my recipes. I use all low-sugar recipes that have more fruit than sugar, and make six kinds of sugar-free products us-

ing white grape juice as a sweetener."

Some of her more unusual recipes are corncob jelly and rose petal jelly. She developed a lot of her recipes on her own after "tasting something somewhere," then coming home to try new flavor blends. There are always two or three potential new recipes on her "drawing board," she says. Some recipes also come from customer requests and she is always open to custom orders.

With no regular store hours, Sloat's business is open "by chance or by appointment." This works well for her, since she needs to be flexible and available for her three children and a farming husband who sometimes needs help. However, she is usually in the kitchen five days per week to keep her inventory from depleting.

"I'm busy through the winter, too, because I freeze berries and also can the juice from berries, so there's always fruit to work with," she says. "The jams and jellies are very popular and make a great home business because people are looking for homemade, from-the-

In addition to jam, Sloat also sells cookie dough, apple turnovers, jumbo muffins and gift baskets.



farm products."

To broaden what her basement store offers, Sloat also makes nine kinds of homemade frozen cookie doughs, apple turnovers, jumbo muffins and gift baskets. The ambitious woman contracts out exclusively made aprons, gift bags and country aprons to add to the charm of her store merchandise. She retails bread and pancake mixes, ice cream toppings, a raisin/nut/candy mixture, and a variety of Minnesota-grown products such as consignment crafts, candles, linens and children's items.

"Everything I carry contributes to the homey, country flavor of Yesterday's Kitchen," she says. "I've also started whole-

salings and doing a mail order business through my website."

Every year, she and her family hosts a "Harvestfest" on two different weekends in October. Her parents assist with pumpkin painting, hayrides and other activities, while she gives tours of her jam kitchen.

Sloat charges \$3.50 per half-pint jar of jam or jelly, but will do other sizes on request.

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