

Trapping Bees Is Sweet Business

Benny Kirby has been trapping bees commercially for more than 22 years, mostly out of homes and businesses. He charges according to distance from home and difficulty reaching the bee hole. He has charged as much as \$550, but most jobs run from \$250 to \$300. And, of course, he gets to keep the bees.

Last year he ended up with 40 gal. of honey from 15 hives that he maintains using bees he's trapped for customers.

"I took five swarms of bees out of one local home," says Kirby. "You can then move the bees anywhere you want and set them up in a hive as long as it is over three miles from where they were."

Kirby tells of one house where a painter had covered up all the exit holes. Bees had been in residence for decades. When it got hot, honey started running out of the walls.

"Bees are able to keep honey at a certain temperature so when the bees weren't there, the wax melted, and it started running," says Kirby.

Trapping the bees prevents fresh nectar from being brought in to feed the queen. She stops laying eggs, and the bees that emerge eat the honey from the combs.

"Once the bees stop coming out, you know the honey is gone," says Kirby. "I once took 22 lbs. of bees out of an apartment house in one 24-hr. period."

Kirby uses two types of traps. One is passive, and the other is active. The passive trap is simply a box with wire screening for sides. The ends are made from plastic boxes. He cut a door in one end and attached a funnel to the other end, then pop riveted them to the screening.

Kirby nails a 2 by 6-in. or 2 by 8-in. board with a hole in it over the hole where the bees enter the house or building. The board helps block and direct the bees. It also provides a place to hang the trap. As the bees exit through the board's hole, they enter the funnel end of the bee trap. A flap over the end of the funnel lets them enter the trap, but prevents them from exiting.



Kirby's passive trap is a box with wire screen on sides (left). He also has a powered trap that uses a vacuum for suction (right).

"It works like a minnow trap," says Kirby.

If electricity is handy, he will use his active trap that is powered by an old Eureka vacuum. Kirby cut away everything but the blower, which he attached to an airtight box. A hose coming out of the box attaches to the bee exit to suck bees out.

"To keep the bees in the box, I cut the fingers off a rubber glove and attached it to the

end of the hose in the box," says Kirby. "As long as the vacuum is running, the fingers stand out and the bees crawl through. When I shut it off the glove collapses, and the bees can't get out."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Benny Kirby, 1101 Scenic Lake Ct., Antioch, Tenn. 37013 (ph 615 360-8051).

Horse Hair Business Is Hot

Whether it be chewed off tails, rubbed-out manes, or simply a genetic disposition for thin "locks", there is hope for horses who are having a "bad hair" day.

Valerie Nilsson's business, "Broom Tails by Valerie," is overwhelmed with international demand for her patent pending, 100 percent natural horsehair products.

Nilsson makes "wigs" for horses - better known as full tail extensions, switches, and mane and forelock extensions. In the show world, Western pleasure competitors make up a big sector of her business. Owners of cutting and reining horses also love her products. These horsemen seek long flowing manes and tails because of how they accentuate the movement of the animal.

"Judges' perceptions are crucial to high stakes competitors, and subtle cosmetic enhancements can often make the difference between winning and losing," she says.

When, in 1997, the American Quarter Horse Association approved the show ring use of such enhancements for their vast membership, Nilsson knew the market was opening up.

Nilsson purchases her raw materials by the pound from several sources, including

a local packing plant and overseas importation. The recycled horse hair undergoes a labor-intensive, two-week process that includes washing, preservation, sorting for color and length, conditioning, and sometimes, dyeing or adding highlights.

"Shana Witbeck in Vernal, Utah, is my U.S. partner and we're on the road a lot together. We travel to world and national shows in the U.S. and Canada with our 17-ft. cargo trailer, and set up our booth," Nilsson says. "All they have to do is see us, and this business sells itself. Orders are stacked up - I'm as busy as my body can handle."

Nilsson's hair products are attached to the animal using hair-to-hair methods such as braiding and wrap-arounds. Mane and forelock extensions are either glued in or clipped in.

Besides beautifying live animals, Broom Tails by Valerie are also popular with craftspeople who want to add realism to the large rocking horses, carousel horses, and life-sized horse mannequins.

Nilsson sells her products privately and also wholesales to a western apparel and tack catalog company. She's had orders from France, Russia, Germany and the Netherlands.



Photo by Linda Toleman

Hair for horse "wigs" comes from overseas and also a local packing plant. They're attached to animals by braiding or wrap-arounds.

Depending on the volume and weight, prices for natural full tails and switches range from \$79 to \$350 (U.S.), plus S&H.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Broom Tails by Valerie, Box 277, Magrath, Alta.,

Canada T0K 1J0 or in the U.S., Broom Tails by Valerie, Box 402, Babb, Mont. 59411 (ph 403 758-3062; email: val@broomtails.com; website: www.broomtails.com).

How To Get Into The Wreath-Making Business

If you're looking for a profitable sideline business, you might want to check out the information on wreath-making that's available from the University of Maine.

University of Maine Forestry Specialist, Jim Philp, says wreath making is a huge business in Maine.

"Balsam fir is abundant here, as well as in New Brunswick, Quebec and Nova Scotia. As a result, the wreath industry is very strong and active. It's a real network. Millions of wreaths are sold locally, shipped nation-wide or exported," Philp says. "Balsam fir is the material of choice because it is abundant, easy to work with, has an ex-

cellent odor when brought indoors and it's attractive. The wreath business is an option for anyone living in any area where balsam fir grows."

The fact sheets available from the university explain that there are various ways to get into the business. They include: gathering fir branch tips (12 to 20 in. long) and sell them to wreath makers; making wreaths and selling them to a wreath buyer; and making wreaths and selling them directly to consumers.

Philp suggests that one good way to get started in the business is to watch for newspaper ads from people looking to buy fir tips.

Like most things, the market fluctuates, but the recent retail price for a 24-in. Balsam fir wreath was \$29.50 plus shipping.

The University's free fact sheets suggest methods for tip gathering and selling, tools required, and various sources of general business information.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, University of Maine Cooperative Extension Dept., Publications Distribution Center, 5741 Libby Hall, Room 114, Orono, Maine 04469 (ph 800 287-0274 or 207 581-3792 or 207 581-1110; email: tnelson@umext.maine.edu; website: www.umext.maine.edu/publications/forestrywildlife.htm).



A good way to get started in business is to watch newspaper ads for people who want to buy Balsam fir tips, says the University of Maine.