

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income



At 22 years old, Allen Kasten farms on his own and also restores old tractors. He charges around \$2,000 per restoration.

Young Farmer's Sideline Is Restoring Old Tractors

When Allen Kasten, Hillsboro, Ill., was 14 years old, he restored a 1937 Allis Chalmers WC with the help of a family friend. He did it because he thought it'd be cool to have one.

"That was the start of my business which just keeps on growing," says Kasten.

Now, the 22-year-old keeps busy farming 320 acres on his own, helping his dad farm and running the tractor business on the side.

Kasten restores about six tractors a year, mostly during the winter months. "I usually get back in the shop around November," he says, adding that it takes about three weeks to do most jobs. Although he specializes in Allis Chalmers, he also restores Deere and Internationals.

The shop has a hydraulic lift and areas for painting, welding and mechanical work.

Right now, he's restoring his own Allis Chalmers WD 45 Diesel and another AC WD 45.

Kasten doesn't advertise much aside from attending area antique tractor shows and advertising in the program books. Word of mouth also plays an important role. "I'm booked up right now and have a waiting list." Depending on the project, he charges around \$2,000 for the work which includes stripping the machine down, replacing parts and painting.

He says his favorite part of the job is talking with the old guys. "They always have stories about how they used to run that kind of equipment. It's pretty neat."

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Fiberglass horses sell for \$600 to \$3,000. Custom-made molds of horses or other animals sell for \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Where To Buy A Fiberglass Horse

If you're looking for an eye-catching display that'll stand out enough to become a landmark for your place, you might want to look at getting a fiberglass horse.

"The statues are mainly used for advertising by businesses or on horse farms," says Michelle Otten, a representative of FiberStock, Inc. of Buffalo, Minn. The company makes other animals, too.

The statues are hand seamed together from molds and sprayed with a fiberglass coating. You can paint them or have the company do it. Custom painting costs between \$350 and \$500.

Fiberglass horses sell for \$600 to \$3,000 and custom-made molds of a particular animal sell for \$2,000 to \$5,000.

It's an investment that lasts, too. "We've seen statues that have been around for more than 30 years and are still in good shape."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Fiberstock, Inc., 6069 County Rd. 33 SE., Buffalo, Minn. 55313 (ph 612 961-2301; fiberstock@aol.com; www.fiberstock.com).



Cameron Tomkins-Bergh uses a Rodenator Pro blaster in his gopher-killing business. He charges \$60 for the first hour and \$47 for each additional hour.

Teenage Gopher Blaster

Cameron Tomkins-Bergh used to trap gophers the normal way until he saw a Rodenator Pro at work. The 17-year-old knew immediately that he could control more gophers quicker and with less work, which translated into a business opportunity for him.

"I had raised pigs and direct-marketed them, but when my mom brought home a pamphlet on the Rodenator, I decided to go in a new direction," says Tomkins-Bergh.

The Rodenator injects a combination of propane and oxygen into a gopher, woodchuck or badger tunnel system. The mixture is then set off by a sparker to create a controlled explosion. The shockwave kills the problem animals and collapses their burrows.

Wanting to start his business right, he talked to local county agents about the need. He also brainstormed with the small business director at a local college and Bob Bruno, factory representative for the Rodenator.

"Bob advised me that word of mouth was best," says Tomkins-Bergh. "I also put up posters at local elevators."

He also sent letters and made calls to local farms, nurseries and orchards and targeted homes with big lawns and gardens, as well as horse riding stables where gopher holes

can be dangerous for horse and rider.

Getting his business started required an investment of about \$7,000 including an ATV, trailer and the \$1,890 Rodenator.

One of his first customers was an organic dairy. Some neighboring farmers also signed on. By late summer and early fall, he was completely booked up. He notes that gopher activity tends to peak in spring and early summer and then again in the fall.

Tomkins-Bergh charges by the hour at \$60 for the first hour and \$47 for each additional hour. Each job is different, he says, as the number of mounds in an area and soil conditions affect how quickly he can get the job done. If the soil is too dry, the gas leaks out, and it takes longer.

"On a couple of farms, the initial job took about 10 hours," recalls Tomkins-Bergh. "Now they have me come back every weekend and get any that have wandered in from neighboring fields."

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Websites Help Sell Farm Products

If you sell farm products direct to consumers, the internet can be a great way to find buyers. But setting up your own website can be a hassle.

Another option is to get a listing – usually free – on one of a number of websites that link farmers and consumers.

Local Harvest (www.localharvest.com) lists family farms, farmers' markets and other small-scale, locally oriented food businesses from all over the country. Each listing has a contact name and phone number as well as a website, if available. You can update the information at any time.

It also has an online store where customers order products for mail delivery or pickup.

New Farm's "Farm Locator" at www.newfarm.org/farmlocator is another national directory. Each site helps consumers, brokers, restaurateurs, and other farmers find farm services they want.

And Farmstop.com lists farms that welcomes visitors. It's part of an "agritourism" website.

Check with your state department of agriculture to see if they have a web directory on their website as well.

Farm-Based Software Business

When David Olsen returned to the family farm near Thompson, Iowa after going to college and working for a seed company, he knew he'd need to find a way to supplement his income while working the family farm.

As it happened, a new business idea came to him the first time he was faced with figuring out LDP's, crop insurance and other farm program issues.

The problem was he couldn't find a computer program that let him predict the outcomes of different scenarios, so he studied some computer programming and created MyFarm Risk Eliminator software. The PC computer program models financial results even when you don't know what yields or prices will be.

"Every time you change a single number, crop insurance choice, or marketing

option, the software recalculates 260 yield and price scenarios for that crop," says Olsen.

Some of the questions it answers include: How much grain can I afford to market without increasing my risk? What level of crop insurance and what coverage level should I take? Is it more profitable to plant corn or soybeans?

Olsen now spends 60 to 70 percent of his time running the business while the rest is spent farming.

The software licenses for as little as \$147 per year which includes updates and unlimited technical support.

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