

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income

Business Thrives On Pregnant Mare Milk

Milk from pregnant mares is a valuable commodity with a lot of uses, says Noel Wiley of Harlingen, Texas. He's co-owner of "Wiley B. Equine Dairy Products" in partnership with Virgil Buffington of Jamesport, Mo. The men have recently begun purchasing mare's milk from six small Amish horse milking farms in Missouri and Wisconsin. To their knowledge, it's the only venture of its kind in North America.

The six horse dairies have a combined total of 150 producing animals. Wiley says the demand for mare's milk is very strong. Their processing plant in Jamesport receives about 300 gallons of milk a day.

Wiley and Buffington began establishing the business in June, and one of the many tasks that have kept them busy is overseeing that the milking barns meet Grade A health regulations (as in cow dairies). They've currently got a waiting list of several other Amish farmers who want to become horse milk suppliers.

Collection of horse milk is common in Mongolia, Wiley explains, and there's an extensive network of equine dairies in European countries such as Germany, France, Belgium, and Holland, where business is brisk.

"I've been to Europe twice researching mare's milk. Customers come right to those farms to buy milk," he says. "They sell fresh milk, frozen milk, powdered milk, capsules of powdered horse milk, liqueur, and even ice cream made with horse milk. European athletes are big users of horse milk products."

Back in the U.S., the partners pasteurize their milk and then spray dry it into powder without adding preservatives or flavorings. They then market it as a nutritional supplement,

or process it as a key ingredient in a line of skin care products that they make.

The skin care products are branded "Ooh La Leche Mare's Milk Total Body Care Collection." Promotional material points out that pregnant mare's milk "contains many nutrients that the skin can easily absorb."

"The same gestational hormones that a woman produces during her own pregnancy are present in mare's milk - and the earliest physical sign in human pregnancy is the full, moist, radiant change in facial complexion," Wiley says. "This can be duplicated with the use of products made with pregnant mare's milk."

Wiley says there's also a market for American powdered horse milk in Asia where it's used in baby formula, yogurt, power drinks, liqueur and dietary supplement capsules.

When consumed fresh, mare's milk tastes sweet, smooth, and light, without any aftertaste. "Daily consumption of horse milk is very beneficial because it's extremely vitamin-rich, with lower calorie and fat content than cow's milk. It's also easily digestible, due to a higher albumin content. The same benefits can be accomplished using our powdered dietary supplement, but with added convenience. It's available in capsule or bulk form.

Mares are milked five times a day, using a special two-suction-cup milking machine that's powered by a diesel-powered vacuum pump.

Milking of the pregnant mares begins at their second month of pregnancy and finishes in their eighth month. Since they're re-bred soon after giving birth, mares still have foals on them during the six-month milking period. However, the foals are at least two months old and eating grain and hay before the farm-



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ers begin milking the mares.

The foals are separated from their mothers by a fence during the day to allow mechanical milking, but at night the pairs are re-united and turned out on pasture. Wiley says each mare produces about two gallons of milk per day. Draft breeds are generally the highest producers, and are normally calmer and easier to handle.

Wiley and Buffington sell a one-month supply of their dietary supplement capsules (90 per bottle) for \$39.95 while the powdered horse milk is priced at \$55 per lb. (special discounts apply for bulk purchases over 250 lbs.)

The company also offers hair and body shampoo and foot and body creams.

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These Folks Train Other People's Show Cattle

"Making the grade" at a cattle show or sale has a lot to do with how well the animals are presented. Since not every cattleman has the time, experience, talent or facilities to make their show cattle stand out from the crowd, a family in Silesia, Montana saw an opportunity to provide such a service.

That was more than three years ago, and Vanek Cattle Services has been busy ever since. The Leonard Vanek family trains and prepares other people's cattle for the show ring by halter breaking, washing, clipping, grooming and generally primping every aspect of the animal's appearance and behavior. They handle all breeds for clients from all over the U.S.

Leonard and Diane Vanek, and their children Dan and Pam, work together on their 70-acre ranch to turn unpolished bovines into well-behaved, sparkling gems. They also travel to all types of shows and sales, where they do on-site clipping and grooming. Often, the cattle owners also hire them to do the showing itself.

"We'd been showing our own cattle since the early 1970's, so we had a lot of experience and contacts already," Leonard explains.

The Vaneks knew that training and fitting cattle wouldn't be enough to keep them busy full-time, so they diversified the business right from the get-go. They also offer artificial insemination services, which keeps them on the run from March until July. Diane also began a cattle photogra-

phy business, which occupies her year-round. She photographs the animals on-farm for production sale catalogs, as well as at-the-show champions.

The Vaneks have their own mixed breed herd of 70 cows on their ranch, along with boarder animals that are in training. All breeds and types are welcome - from freshly weaned calves, to two-year-old bulls.

"It takes at least 30 days to get an animal in condition for a show, but we've had cattle here for up to a year. Ideally, we prefer to have at least 60 to 70 days before a show to work with them," Leonard explains. "Last season, we halter broke more than 100 animals from seven or eight states."

Vanek says he and his family usually wash the animals every day, using hair softeners and conditioners, and then hair blowers to blow their hair out. This is all necessary to get the hair trained to flow the way they want it to. They keep the cattle on straw in the barn where it's cool.

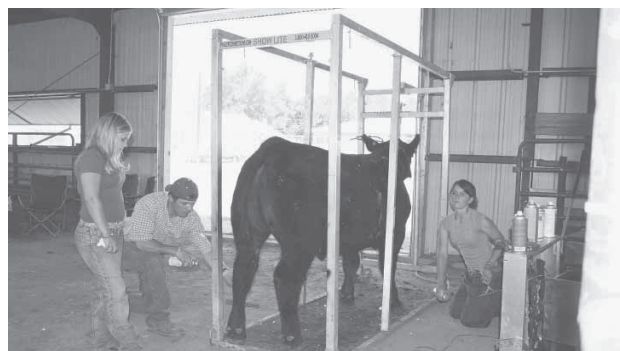
"They need to be out of the sun so their hair color doesn't bleach - heat isn't good for it. We also clip the hair to make the animal look its best," he explains.

Leonard and Dan also hit the road to groom high value bulls for sales. The furthest away they've been hired is Grand Junction, Colorado, which is 700 miles from home.

"We often work on animals worth \$20,000 to \$30,000. A bull we clipped last year sold for \$180,000," Leonard says. "It's really a good feeling to know that we help contribute



The Leonard Vanek family trains and prepares other people's cattle for the show ring by offering halter breaking, washing, clipping, and grooming.



"It can take 30 days to get an animal in condition for a show," say the Vaneks.

to those kinds of animals looking good." Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Vanek Cattle Services, Leonard Vanek, 331 Grapevine Rd., Silesia, Montana 59041 (ph 406-962-3213; vanekcattleservices@earthlink.net).