

Goosemobile Pays Off For Rural Couple

The Goosemobile has been a popular mobile store at the Farmers Market in Sioux Falls for a decade. Customers walk into the 26-ft. cargo trailer to buy chicken, goose, duck, lamb, pork, beef and even dog food from eight chest freezers.

Combined with doing their own poultry processing, Tom and Ruth Neuberger have been finding new ways to generate income on their small farm for 3 decades. At 78, they hope to find a younger entrepreneur interested in taking over the business soon.

The Canistota, S. Dak., couple installed poultry processing equipment in a 48-ft. refrigerated semi trailer in 1993, in an effort to generate extra income to keep their 160-acre farm.

The Neuberger's have a history of taking products directly to customers. For a time they were part of an association with other goose producers, which owned three trucks to deliver processed geese on different routes in South Dakota. When the others quit, the Neuberger's purchased the trucks.

Now, with rotational grazing, they raise 3,000 chickens, 100 geese, 200 ducks, 200 turkeys and a few beef, pigs and lambs. They direct market the meat and other products, including down comforters and pillows, goose grease and other byproducts.

"It's really flourished especially in the last years," Ruth says. "We can't keep up with chicken breast orders." Besides whole chickens, they also sell eggs, cut-up chickens and three flavors of gourmet chicken patties.

Their business has three parts: South Dakota Goosemobile, Pastured Omega Meats, and Dakota Down Products.

"We have wonderful, faithful customers who appreciate quality, local products," Ruth says. The Neuberger's haul their Goosemobile to the Sioux Falls Farmers Market every Saturday during the growing season and make weekly deliveries to Sioux Falls the rest of the year.

The extra processing pays off, Ruth says. Chicken breasts sell for \$4.50, for example, while whole chicken prices start at \$5.75.



Tom and Ruth Neuberger sell chicken, goose, duck, lamb, pork, beef and even dog food from eight chest freezers in this 26-ft. "Goosemobile".

They charge \$3.50/lb. for geese.

"We only have 160 acres, and by doing all these different things, we can make a living and satisfy a lot of people with good food," Ruth says. "It's kept us interested."

The Neuberger's would like to sell the business including the Goosemobile, the process-

ing plant on wheels, and other equipment. Contact them for more information.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tom and Ruth Neuberger, 45052 260th St., Canistota, S. Dak. 57012 (ph 605 296-3314; goosedown@unitelsd.com; www.sd-exports.org/sdpoultry.htm).

Mobile Freezer Preserves Fruit In The Field

Pick-your-own and other small fresh berry producers have a short window to capture profits each year. A mobile freezer developed for Vermont producers by the state of Vermont and the USDA may be the answer to more profit and less loss.

"We wanted a flow-through rate of 600 lbs. per hour with the ability to freeze produce to -5 to -10 degrees F within 45 minutes," explains Brian Norder, project director and designer of the mobile freezer.

To be practical for small producers, the freezing unit had to be mobile and easily hooked up to standard power. It also had to be able to handle enough produce in a short enough time to be practical. The final design incorporated an insulated, double-walled, 18-ft. tow-behind trailer. The trailer was equipped with a 5 hp, single-phase compressor and a fruit dry-

ing station. Total cost was \$40,000.

All washing and rinsing is done outside. The clean fruit is moved inside the air-conditioned trailer and through a blower/dryer. From there, the trays are rolled into an 8 by 4-ft. freezer. Norder says the unit draws about 17 amps during freezing, though startup draw is a lot higher.

"We found over the summer that it was most efficient if we did two turns of 300 lbs. each per hour rather than the single turn of 600 lbs.," says Norder. "If we did it, we would install a crossover thermostat. We found that small growers wanted to blast freeze down to -25 degrees and then hold the produce overnight at -5 degrees."

In fact, he adds, a new unit would probably utilize a tunnel flash freezer for even faster freezing. Other modifications would include a longer trailer to lower the compres-



Developed for Vermont fresh berry producers, this mobile freezer preserves fruit in the field. Trailer is equipped with a 5 hp, single-phase compressor and a fruit drying station.

sor and the trailer's center of gravity. Norder would also suggest adding a generator to avoid problems where power hookups were not available.

Late season trials with the trailer were largely successful this past year, reports Norder. At least one Vermont pie maker has indicated a desire to expand use of local strawberries and raspberries if they can be frozen at the growing site for higher quality. This year, the unit will be turned over to an independent contractor who will work with

small growers.

"The thought is that it can be set up at a larger grower's operation and smaller area growers can bring their produce for freezing," says Norder. "That way, it will only be moved occasionally with fewer high energy draw start-ups needed."

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"Circling Cart" Breaks Horses To Harness

"It's a real safe way to break horses," says Ernie Herschberger, Humboldt, Ill., about his home-built "circling training cart".

Herschberger runs a sideline business training horses, many of them Tennessee Walkers. His circling cart gets the horses used to the feel of harness and exposes them to the normal day-to-day noises they'll experience.

The horse is hitched to a metal bar on front of the circling cart and is fitted with a harness. The driver guides the horse around a circular sand track. The cart is held like a hot walker to a 20-ft. length of pipe attached to a post.

The circling cart rides on two wheels off a garden tractor and is built largely from an old field cultivator frame. A fence panel on one side keeps the horse from kicking anyone standing on the platform. There's even a 2-ft. wide expanded metal seat alongside the horse where someone can sit and rub the horse to get him used to that. The seat is hinged so that it can be folded down out of the way.

"It gives me complete control of the horse - I'm amazed at how well it works," says

Herschberger. "It's very safe to use because once the horse is hooked in, there's nothing he can do but pull the cart. Sometimes while I'm working somewhere else, I turn the horse loose so that it can trot by itself."

He sometimes drags a weighted harrow section behind the cart. He says three or four workouts with the cart are usually enough. The horse is then ready for hitching to a real cart or wagon.

"To get horses used to noises, sometimes I hang some shredded plastic bags on the bar in front of the horse. Once in a while I'll park a running tractor alongside the track, and then make the horse stop there so he gets used to it. Or I'll start up a chainsaw to get him used to that noise," says Herschberger.

"I got the idea from my uncle, who had built a somewhat similar cart. However, it wasn't as safe because there were no platforms to stand or sit on."

He says he already had most of the materials, and that his total cost to build the cart was less than \$100.

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Home-built "circling training cart" gets horses used to the feel of harness and also exposes them to normal day-to-day noises they'll experience later on.



Driver guides horse around a circular sand track. After three or four workouts, most horses are ready to be hitched to a real cart.