

## Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income

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](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).



Bergamascos have matted coats that range from solid gray to black.

### Rare Sheepdog Combines Companionship with Work

The rare Bergamasco Sheepdog is an ancient breed from the Italian Alps, imported to the U.S. from Italy in 1995.

Also known as the Italian Alpine Sheepdog, the Bergamasco has a distinctive, matted coat that ranges from solid gray to black, and spotted merle. Adult dogs develop a long, thick coat of matted inter-woven hair known as "flocks" which protect them from weather and predators.

Abundant hair covers the eyes and particularly on the front of the body, it has a harsh texture. Although known for its herding instinct, this breed also has a strong need for close human companionship, making it an indoor dog that's ideal for people with an active outdoor lifestyle.

According to breeder Dana Brier of Blizzard Peak Bergamascos at Renfrew, Penn., "Bergamascos generally weigh between 55 and 75 lbs. and are 22 to 24 in. tall at the withers. Besides being athletic, they're a highly intelligent, friendly, family dog that usually live 10 to 15 years."

Brier has five "Bergs". "I chose this breed because a lot of other herding breeds don't make good house pets and aren't happy un-

less they're working," Brier explains. "Overall, the Bergamasco is very balanced and has a relaxed, reserved temperament when not working. These dogs adjust; based on the environment they're in, although apartment-style living isn't recommended. Also, they're hypoallergenic because they have no dander and don't shed."

Bergamascos are versatile in that they can be trained for obedience and agility, in addition to herding livestock.

With less than 350 Bergamascos in North America (estimated), these dogs are expensive, averaging about \$1,800 each. There are currently only about five active breeders in North America but a variety of associations exist for Bergamasco enthusiasts.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Blizzard Peak Bergamascos, Dana and Janet Brier, 149 Serenity Lane, Renfrew, Penn. 16053 (ph 724 586-2732; [brier@nauti.com.net](mailto:brier@nauti.com.net); [www.blizzardpeakalpacas.com](http://www.blizzardpeakalpacas.com)); or Bergamasco Sheepdog Association of Canada, 1205 Head Rd., Cloyne, Ontario, Canada K0H 1K0 (ph 613 336-1769; [info@bergamasco.ca](mailto:info@bergamasco.ca); <http://bergamasco.ca>).



Adult dogs develop a long, thick coat of matted inter-woven hair known as "flocks".

### Stackable Strawberry Pots Boost U-Pick Business

Aaron and Sarah Kennel in Monmouth, Oregon say that growing strawberries in vertically-stacked, polystyrene foam pots is a great way to set up a U-pick operation. It makes it easy to pick a lot of berries in a small space and they're even available in wheel-chairs and walkers.

The operation grows 15,000 strawberry plants on only 1/4 of an acre - only about 1/8 of the land that would be required for a conventional operation. Water demand is also dramatically cut.

"There's no need to get on your hands and knees or strain your back. Berry pickers can either stand or sit," Kennel explains. "The 5-ft. tall columns of plants swivel around aluminum poles like rotating store racks. There are five tiers per column, and each tier is one piece but provides four individual plant cones. On the ground below, we have industrial strength nursery cloth, to keep it smooth and dry with no weeds, rodents or mud. The fabric also keeps slugs off the plants."

The plants grow in a soil-less growing media and hydroponic "micro-irrigation tubes" supply nutrient-rich water to the roots several times a day. With no soil involved, nothing gets dirty. The elevated tier towers of perforated planters mean that the strawberries are less susceptible to mold and insect problems because of better air flow, and overhead nozzles deliver an organic control solution when necessary.

"To avoid uprooting the plants, which aren't anchored in soil, we supply scissors to snip the berries from the vine," he says. "Picking strawberries this way is much easier than the traditional way."

Kennels say their produce is sweet and flavorful because of the way it's grown. Also, by growing seven different varieties, they're able to extend their productive season from the typical two to three week strawberry growing period to five to six months. The



Vertically-stacked, polystyrene foam pots are a great way to set up a U-pick operation, say Aaron and Sarah Kennel of Monmouth, Oregon.

success of some of the varieties they're growing is due to the insulative foam containers keeping the roots warmer than if they were in the ground.

While maintenance and repairs to the hydroponic setup are minimal, the plants become root-bound by the end of the season and must be discarded and replaced each spring.

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### Silo Demolition Man Finds Strong Demand For Services

Bringing down unwanted silos might look daunting to most people, but not to Jeff Collins of the Clinton area, in southern Wisconsin.

Starting 14 to 15 years ago with only one part time helper, his career began as "a one-time job" for a neighbor, and grew into a steady sideline.

The business has grown to between 50 and 120 take downs (demolitions) per year, or two to three per week for the full-time beef and hog farmer.

Silo number one fell from the use of a sledge hammer alone, but Collins now uses a skid loader with a hydraulic breaker attachment to weaken either stave (cement block) or poured concrete silos. The largest he has demolished is a 24 by 110-ft. poured concrete silo.

"Ninety-five percent of the time, you take out the bottom - sort of notch it like a tree, then work on the opposite side - and it will come down," says Collins.

Although it's a high risk operation, cables can be used to influence it in the right direction. The main thing that Collins considers in the process is safety, as he knows of a case where someone inexperienced attempted a demolition and it was fatal. There is no room

for mistakes.

Collins has taken as little as 10 minutes or as long as six hours to demolish a silo, depending on how much it's been reinforced. Traveling takes more time than the demolition, most of the time, he says.

Collins doesn't own a loader or trucks for clean up, but sometimes he can recommend an outfit. Clean-up equipment is cheaper hired closer to the job, as Collins has traveled as far as 400 miles to do jobs.

He says the biggest reasons for demolition are that either the silo has deteriorated from lack of up-keep, or it has become inadequate, requiring removal.

Most of the time, he can give estimates over the phone, although things such as size, type, and room to work, need to be considered. Costs can be as little as \$400, but can run into the thousands if the job proves complex.

Collins enjoys the work and meeting a variety of people, and intends to continue the business for at least a few more years.

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