

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income



Doris Issendorf makes drums out of deer and other big game hides, mounting them on round or octagon frames.

She Turns Deer Hides Into Drums

Doris Issendorf of Henning, Minn., makes drums out of deer and other big game hides. They make unique keepsakes for hunters to remember a successful hunt.

Issendorf starts the process with a carefully skinned hide, soaking and scraping the hair off and then washing the hide out in vinegar water, before drying it. An average-sized hide will make two 15-in. drums.

She mounts them on round or octagon frames, using laces she cuts from the hide. She can personalize a drum by painting it with acrylic or powder paint, or woodburn the name of the hunter and year on the frame.

Prices start at \$125 for deer hide drums.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Doris Issendorf, 43340 230th St., Henning, Minn. 56551 (ph 218 583-4102; dizzen@arvig.net; www.redeagleldrums.com).



An average-sized hide will make two 15-in. drums.

Swimming Pigs Put On A Show

Robinson's Racing Pigs are on their way to destroying the myth that pigs will cut their own throats with their hooves when swimming.

"They're natural born swimmers," says Randall Ross, owner of Robinson's Racing Pigs. The company sets up pig races with a 24-ft. long water tank. After running halfway around the track, the fast-moving porkers hit the water about mid-tank, Ross says, so there's a good chance folks in the first row will get a quick shower.

The racing pigs have been entertaining people at fairs, grand openings - even barbecues - throughout the U.S. and Canada since 1985. The business was started by Paul and Carlota Robinson, when they debuted a pig racing event at the Florida State Fair. It was so popular that they were asked to attend several events before the fair was over.

Ross, who built the first track and trained pigs since the beginning, now owns the business, which has six 8-pig teams booked across the U.S., Canada and even Bermuda. Other companies also race pigs, he notes, but theirs is the only one to include swimming.

"The whole race takes about five or six seconds," Ross says. "The prize is an Oreo cookie. The losers get the crumbs."

Because of their smaller size, pot-belly pigs and domesticated wild pigs are used for racing. Training starts at five weeks - using Oreos as rewards. The pigs compete from three months up to five years old. When they get more than 150 lbs. and to a certain age, they lose their competitive



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spirit, Ross says. Females retire to the Florida farm as breeders - some are as old as 20. Neutered males are adopted to good homes.

The business also adopts and rehabilitates potbelly pigs that have gotten too heavy. People often overfeed them, Ross notes. Robinson Swimming Pigs are fed high protein hog food to keep them in shape.

People tend to think of pigs being stinky and lazy, Ross says. He believes his pigs prove they don't have those traits, and that they can be impressive entertainers.

"I love to see people's faces watching them," Ross says.

Groups interested in booking the racing/swimming pigs for an event should call for prices.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Randall Ross, Robinson's Racing Pigs, 487 S.W. Scout Glen, Fort White, Florida 32038 (ph 352 514-4864; racingpigs@juno.com).



Tanner Schrock specializes in making unusual pens including this corn cob cigar-style pen (left) and one made from sunflower shells.

Pen Maker Specializes In The "Unique"

Tanner Schrock makes pens out of just about anything: corn cobs, rattlesnake skins, exotic wood - even sunflower shells. A couple of years ago, the Ankeny, Iowa, man spotted some unique pens on the internet and decided to try making his own. Since then, he's experimented with a variety of materials and styles.

"Pens are practical things to have so it's fun to try different ways of making them," Schrock says. Besides selling to pen collectors, many customers purchase them as gifts.

Schrock begins each pen by drilling out the center of whatever material he's using and gluing in brass tubes. Each pen has two pieces that he shapes on the lathe. After shaping, he sands them down smooth. He finishes with coats of cyanoacrylate (Super Glue), buffing

the finish to a smooth shine.

Corn cob cigar-style pens are the most challenging. Schrock adds resin to the corn cob to hold it together before putting it on the lathe.

"My favorite is rattlesnake skin wrapped around a pen tube," Schrock says. "It just looks really cool."

Besides styles - cigar, slimline, designer and fountain pen - the pen maker offers options for the pen parts, including brass, copper, gold and other types of plating.

Prices range from \$25 to \$170.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tanner Schrock, 8171 N.W. 28th Ct., Ankeny, Iowa 50023 (ph 515 991-5300; t_schrock@hotmail.com).



The company's "mini" kilns have features found in much larger units.

Down-Sized Kilns Dry Lumber, Firewood

Small sawmill operations can now get the latest kiln-drying technology - just like the big boys - in a turnkey 12 by 28-ft. unit from Kiln-direct.com. Seasonal firewood makers can go year round, adding value to their firewood with the firewood version. Both kilns come fully assembled. An on-site technician helps get them up and running. Units are priced in the \$35,000 to \$40,000 range, depending on options.

"With the firewood kiln, you can generate 10 cords two to three times per week," says Jorgensen.

The lumber kiln holds from 7,000 to 9,000 board feet of lumber. It includes a full-featured control system, integrated wood moisture meter and lower-energy consumption heat recovery.

"This kiln is sized for the portable sawmill operator, the fellow with the largest portable bandsaws," says Jorgensen.

The optional waste wood-fired hot water system can be used with either kiln, replacing or supplementing the gas system. Used alone, it will roughly double the time needed to dry down a load of firewood.

"The firewood version of our Small Lumber Kiln doesn't have all the computer con-

trols and is more similar to a traditional kiln system. It also can be used for rudimentary lumber drying," says Niels Jorgensen, owner, Kiln-direct.com and developer of the kilns. "You can take 10 cords of wood from green to dry in a 24-hour period."

Jorgensen says a firewood seller can add significant value to his wood with a kiln. Not only does the kiln dry the wood, it also sterilizes it, killing any insects, eggs or larvae. This is becoming increasingly important, not only for what Jorgensen describes as fireproof wood buyers, but also to control the spread of pests such as elm borer, gypsy moth and others. Fast drying also means a quicker payback.

The kilns themselves are all aluminum structures with foam insulation and heat recovery on the vents. Both feature a bi-fold door for easy access.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kiln-direct.com, P.O. Box 159, 200A Progress Drive Ext., Burgaw, N.C. 28425 (ph 910 259-9794; fax 910 259-1625; sales@kiln-direct.com; www.kiln-direct.com).