



This combine, built in 1886 by G.S. Berry, was the world's first self-propelled machine, according to some reports. The 22-ft. rig cut and cleaned 50 acres of grain per day. It was also the first straw-fired steam combine, fueling itself "on the go".

## Readers React To Combine Story

Last issue's story, "Is This The World's First Self-Propelled Combine?", stirred up a lot of response from readers telling us that Edward Hindahl's home-built self-propelled Gleaner combine, built in 1934, was not the first self-propelled combine ever built. Here's a few of the comments we received:

I usually enjoy your paper but it bothered me to think that nobody checks into far-out stories like this one, which was submitted by Hindahl's relatives, before they are printed. There were self-propelled combines at least 50 years before Hindahl built his machine. Will I see a correction in a future issue? (*Doug Crowley, Beechy, Sask., Canada*)

I am sending along a xerox of a page from Edén & Birnie's Manitoba history book which shows a picture of a 1929 Sunshine combine. The book claims this combine, which was built in Australia, was the first self-propelled combine. (*William Husak, General Delivery, Stayner, Ontario, LDM ISO Canada*)

I'm sending along several pages from a book put out by the Caterpillar Company (Fifty Years On Cat Tracks) that claims the first self-propelled harvester was built in 1915 by Benjamin Holt in California. It states that Holt also developed the first sidehill combine, which made profitable grain farming a reality on hundreds of thousands of untilled sloping acres in the Pacific Northwest. (*Paul Soffner, Rt. 1, Box 10, Burdick, Kan. 66838*)

The writer of the article, "Is This The World's First Self-Propelled Combine?", should have done a little library study. So far as I know, the first self-propelled combine was built in 1886 by George Stockton Berry of Tulare, Calif. Later, around the turn of the century, both Benjamin Holt and a manufacturer named Best developed self-propelled machines. The Best machine was very limited in production but Holt produced his for several years. The machine used a half track and one drive wheel for propulsion. I have seen two of Holt's machines in farmers' junk yards—one near Meade, Kan., and the other near Garfield, Wash.

In 1921 the Gleaner company showed their first self-propelled machine at the annual Wichita Tractor Show. It was mounted on a Fordson tractor and had a 10-ft. cut and 17 bu. grain tank.

I'm sure that during the 100 years that the combine was around before Mr. Hindahl built his machine, many individuals built their own self-propelled machines but lacked the necessary capital and "knowhow" to put them into production. (*J. Roberts, PE, 11127 Mirandy Court, Sun City, Ariz. 85351 ph 602 974-2143*).

## "THE ONLY BREED OF DRAFT HORSE TO ORIGINATE IN THE U.S."

# They Raise "American Cream" Draft Horses

"They're the only breed of draft horses to originate in the U.S. and one of the rarest horse breeds in the country," say Frank and Penny Sperlak of Ellsworth, Wis., who are among only a handful of people in the U.S. still raising American Cream draft horses.

The cream colored draft horse has a white mane and tail, pink skin, and amber-colored eyes. "The white markings contrast beautifully with the rich cream color," note the Sperlaks.

Now near extinction, the little-known

breed had the great misfortune of coming onto the scene during the 1930's when the emergence of tractors led to a decline in draft horse use. According to the American Minor Breeds Conservancy, based in Pittsboro, N.C., there have been only 250 registered American Creams since the founding of the breed in 1935.

The Sperlaks own two American Creams, a 9-year-old stallion called Champ and a yearling foal. "There are only 40 registered American Creams left in the U.S.," says



Musk oxen have a shaggy outer coat that's shed once a year and a warm undercoat.

## "THE WOOL IS SOFT AS DOWN AND 8 TIMES WARMER THAN SHEEP'S WOOL"

# Montana Couple Raises Arctic Musk Oxen

"We enjoy doing things that are unusual and different. This just seemed right for us," says Joel and Nancy Bender, who, as far as they know, have the only domestic herd of Arctic musk oxen in the lower 48 states.

The Benders own six of the animals and raise them for their valuable wool, called "qiviut". The rare taupe-colored fiber is as soft as down and eight times warmer than sheep's wool.

"As far as we know there's only one other ranch, in Alaska, that raises musk oxen for wool," says Joe. "Our goal is to provide an increased supply of qiviut to hand spinners and fiber artists. Musk oxen males sell for up to \$1,000 and females for up to \$12,000. Full-grown males can weigh up to 1,000 lbs. and stand 5 ft. at the shoulder. Females weigh about 700 lbs. and are 4 ft. tall. They can run amazingly fast for animals that otherwise saunter along at a turtle-like pace. They need little feed - they eat only about a third as much as a cow. We feed them mixed grass hay supplemented by alfalfa pellets during the winter. Because they are native to the Arctic Circle, they need no shelter even during the coldest Montana winters. They're tundra animals. I don't think they'd use a shelter even if we provided it. Last winter we had a wind-chill factor of 82 degrees below zero, and they were out running around and rolling in the snow. It was musk ox heaven. They loved it."

The Benders harvest the wool once a year. "Once you spin it you become spoiled for life," says Nancy, who has a degree in textiles. "It doesn't scratch the skin and it won't shrink even if boiled. It dyes beautifully, too. The wool can't be bought in stores, and is highly sought after for items such as caps, scarves and belts. Raw fiber sells for \$15 per ounce, dehaired fiber for \$25 per ounce, and spun fiber for \$35 per ounce. However, it's so valuable and so warm that it should be used sparingly. Only one ounce is needed to knit a beautiful scarf or hat because you can mix qiviut with silk or fine wool to strengthen it or to stretch the supply. You wouldn't want to knit an entire sweater with it because it would be too hot."

Musk oxen have a two-part coat consisting of a shaggy outer coat which it sheds once a year and a warm undercoat. The Benders collect the fiber by combing the soft undercoat with picks. The job takes three hours per animal.

The Benders have a limited supply of qiviut available on a first come, first served basis. "If you wish to order qiviut please include a phone number so we can inform you on the status of our supply," says Nancy.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joel and Nancy Bender, 633 Fish Hatchery Road, Hamilton, Mont. 59840 (ph 406 363-6818). Photo courtesy Jim Gransbery, Billings, Montana Gazette



American Creams have a white mane and tail, pink skin, amber-colored eyes.

Frank. "There are a few more that haven't been registered, but we still need a wider pool for breeding purposes. We recently used Champ to breed two mares from Iowa. The owner said there were only two American Cream studs left in Iowa and they were so closely related to his mares that he couldn't use them. We're now breeding our two

Belgian mares to Champ, hoping the result will be pink foals with white eyes that will later turn amber. Pink skin is the determining factor in securing the rich cream color. In fact, the pink-skin gene is so dominant that no matter what type of horse the American Cream is bred to, the colts usually turn out to be cream colored and pink-skinned."

The average weight of mares is 1,600 to 1,800 lbs. and stallions from 1,800 to 2,000 lbs. They have ample draft hindquarters, well-muscled chest, and short strong legs, and are well proportioned. The horses range in height from 15-2 in. hands to 16-2 in. hands. They have a good disposition and are uniform in color and type, making for an easily matched team.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Frank and Penny Sperlak, Rt. 3, Box 112, Ellsworth, Wis. 54011 (ph 715 273-3048).