

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.

She Trains Mules For The Back Country

Laurie Warren shies away from being called a mule whisperer, but after 25 years spent working with mules she continues to gain experience and insight as a trainer. At her Council, Idaho, ranch she boards and trains mules for their owners to ride and use as pack animals.

"Mules are the best animals for riding in the back country. They're sure-footed and have a sense of self-preservation that helps them take care of themselves and the rider," Warren says.

Turning a green mule into a competent pack horse takes time and patience. She uses many of the same training techniques used with horses but says mules are more challenging.

"Mules are like a horse, only more so. They have stronger reactions. They learn twice as fast. But you have to be careful not to make a mistake. If I make a mistake, I pay for it," Warren says. "They really demand that you treat them right."

For example, putting a saddle on before the mule is ready results in a couple week setback that's needed to rebuild trust.

Mules also need leadership, so once Warren finishes with training, she works with owners to increase their skill levels and confidence.

"I can have the mule responding well, but the owner needs to take over leadership," she explains.

Ideally, owners bring their yearling mules to her for about a month for manners, and again when they are 2-year-olds for an introduction to packing, and finally at 3 to learn to be a riding mule. After each session, Warren works with the owner.

However, the mule trainer says she works with mules of all ages, including one recently that was 20 years old. Older animals usually require a 3 to 4-month commitment. Warren starts with them in a round pen, then in an arena before acclimating them to the great outdoors.

"It's like a boot camp for them, learning a whole new way of life," Warren notes. "I call it confidence building with stuff on their back and in new surroundings."



Laurie Warren boards and trains mules so owners can ride or use them as pack animals.

Her goal is to transform mules with worried, upright ears to flop-eared mules that are relaxed and happy.

Warren has had clients from all over the U.S., including Hawaii. She customizes training to the mule's needs and client's goals.

Because successfully training mules hinges on owners taking strong leadership and maintaining the trust that has been built up, there are far fewer mule trainers than horse trainers. Warren says she likes the challenge.

"I love working with mules. They give you their whole heart. If I don't do this for mules, who will?" she asks.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Laurie Warren, P.O. Box 699, Council, Idaho 83612 (ph 208 253-1119; www.muleteacher.com; muleteacher@yahoo.com).



Warren starts working with mules inside before acclimating them to the outdoors. "It's like a boot camp for them, learning a whole new way of life," she says.

Rent-A-Chicken Business Takes Off

After starting to raise backyard chickens, Leslie Sutor started setting up others with chickens and coops to house them. Her business has gone national as she licenses her Rent-A-Chicken business to others around the country who rent out chickens to friends and neighbors.

"We license with people who want to get into the business of supplying chickens," says Sutor. "They get to use the Rent-A-Chicken name and get coop plans and designs, breed recommendations for their area, as well as everything we have learned about the business, including contracts for use with customers. Also, we handle all their marketing."

In exchange, Sutor and her husband get 5 percent of the licensee's rental fees. The fees cover 2 hens, a 4 by 8-ft. coop with enclosed run, bedding, waterer and feed. They can run from \$300 to \$400 for a season for the standard package. However, customers can get more birds, a larger coop, chicken treats and toys, organic feed, and other extras that add to the price. Contracts run through the local spring, summer and fall. However, customers can also purchase their hens, coop and accessories. Birds can also be tagged and returned the following season.

Sutor and her husband started Rent-A-Chicken about 7 years ago in the Traverse City, Mich. area. It has since spread through licensees from New Hampshire and Connecticut, south to Virginia and west to eastern Illinois, eastern Colorado, western Oregon and Sacramento, Calif.

"We're hoping to be in most major cities in the near future," says Sutor. "Prices on rentals vary depending on local farmer



Leslie Sutor licenses her Rent-A-Chicken business to franchisees around the country.

suppliers. We tend to focus on heritage breeds. Americanas, with their blue and green eggs, are wildly popular."

The Sutors thoroughly check local ordinances before signing up a licensee. That alone can be a task. "Chicago suburbs are a patchwork quilt," she says. "Chickens can be allowed on one side of a street and not on the other. Most ordinances allow up to 4 hens."

Sutor says the business picked up with the recent avian flu outbreak and the increase in egg prices. "All our licensees were maxed out with rentals by mid-July," says Sutor. "Every time there is a food scare, people start looking at where their food comes from, and we rent chickens like mad."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Leslie Sutor, Rent-A-Chicken (ph 231 463-6670; Hens4Rent@gmail.com; www.rent-a-chicken.net).



As a sideline business to go with his dog breeding operation, Virgil Stewart takes puppies to birthday parties.

Popular Puppy Parties Pay Off Big

Virgil Stewart found a sideline business to go with his dog breeding operation. He takes puppies to birthday parties for kids to pet, cuddle and play with.

"Summer is our season for weekday parties. We can do as many as 12 in a day," says Stewart, who lives near Los Angeles, Calif.

When he started offering puppy parties 25 years ago, they were lucky to do 2 events per weekend. In 2015, he expects to total around 800 parties.

To keep up with the demand, Stewart maintains around 70 dogs and puppies, mostly small breeds noted for their good temperament. Breeds include Maltese, Yorkshire, Jack Russell Terriers, Dachshunds and Shih Tzus.

The fact that even the adults of some of these breeds are small helps. Stewart points to a 5 to 6-year old Daschshund that acts like a puppy and is popular at parties. By far the

most popular, though, are the 2 to 7-month old puppies.

Prices vary by type of animal, length of time, and day of the week. An hour with up to 10 puppies at a birthday party will run \$200.

Parties have ranged from kids to adults and birthdays to fraternities - even professional baseball teams. While adult parties are on the increase, children's birthdays remain Stewart's bread and butter, along with selling the puppies.

Stewart says finding homes for his party puppies is no problem. He has built up a good reputation with area pet dealers.

"I think the parties help to socialize them," says Stewart. "Their temperaments are phenomenal."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Virgil Stewart, Torrance, Calif. (ph 310 328-2040; www.pupsandreps.com).