



Dairy farmer's love for exotic animals led him to start his own zoo.

He Opened A Zoo On His Family's Dairy Farm

When you have too many exotic animals what do you do? Build a zoo, says Dusty Ebersviller, of Vergas, Minn. Trowbridge Creek Zoo opened in 2016 and is on 10 acres that was part of his parents' dairy farm, where Ebersviller still helps with baling and crops – and milking during the winter. But during the summer his main focus is caring for 35 species – more than 100 animals including everything from a variety of deer species to kangaroos to camels.

Ebersviller's passion for collecting animals from around the world began when he was in ninth grade, and he purchased two whitetail deer fawns from a friend. His hobby – and wish list – grew as he added more and more animals to the family farm.

"I needed to make something out of it or cut back," Ebersviller says.

Located in the midst of many lakes and just three miles from a major tourist highway, the zoo offers weekenders and travelers something new to see and do. Ebersviller used the skills he learned growing up on a farm to put up fences (tall ones), build sturdy pens and run water and electric lines. And, like dairy farm regulations, he worked his way through the paperwork and requirements for licensing with the Department of Natural Resources, Board of Animal Health and the United States Department of Agriculture.

"The zoo has about a half-mile loop with an alleyway," Ebersviller says. In addition to pens and shelters for each species, there is a fence around the perimeter, which provides an extra level of security to keep his animals in and wild animals out. A heated barn keeps hot-climate species warm during the winter.

Ebersviller bales grass and alfalfa hay for some of his animals, but most are fed blended feeds. Chores take two or three hours a day. Manure is cleaned up as needed and stockpiled to be spread on fields.

"We had a good first year, but it's still a hobby," Ebersviller says, noting that besides operating the zoo he raises breeding pairs so he can sell to other collectors and zoos. One of his most profitable and unusual species is the African crested porcupine. Unlike North American porcupines, they don't climb trees. But at 14 to 16 in. long, their quills are impressive, and they have one or two babies every 4 to 5 months.

While the zoo's pens are filled with everything from lemurs to ostriches to North American wildlife including bobcats and wolves, the sulcata tortoise and camels seem to be crowd favorites.

"This year we are adding camel rides," he says.

The business is a true family operation with the help of a nephew, his wife Rachel, and their six children, ranging from 3 to 11. Even



Ebersviller cares for 35 species, including lemurs.



This year he added camel rides to entertain visitors.



A heated barn keeps hot-climate species warm during winter.

the youngest get involved in bottle-feeding newborns.

Geared for families, the zoo has a playground and picnic area for visitors. There is also a petting zoo with domesticated animals including potbellied pigs.

The zoo is open from Memorial Day through Labor Day, seven days a week and weekends in the fall until it gets too cold. Cost is \$10.75/adults and \$8.50/children 3-12.

The Trowbridge Creek Zoo Facebook page includes photos that show the variety of animals at the rural zoo.

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**FARM
SHOW**



Trailer-mounted camper has 4 metal fins attached to bulk feed tank's sides that make it look like a rocket.

Bulk Feed Tank Converted To "Rocket Camper"

For about \$2,000, Harry Stracener converted an old bulk feed tank into a trailer-mounted camper that looks like a rocket laid on its side. The camper has 4 metal fins attached to its sides, and four 3-gal. metal buckets on back with red reflectors inside them designed to look like afterburners.

"My friend R. L. Blair actually designed and built it. It was a fun challenge," says Stracener.

The converted feed tank has a 24-in. dia. round window on front, a 24-in. square hinged air vent with plexiglass on top, and a door with plexiglass window and a 5,000-btu air conditioner on back.

"It isn't fancy and has only a single twin bed in front," says Stracener. "The floor, walls, and ceiling are insulated and lined with plywood. But it's all I'll need. I pull it behind my 1/2-ton pickup to antique tractor shows and festivals."

Stracener got the tank from a friend who had recently bought a chicken farm. The 8-ft. tall, 7-ft. dia. tank is made of galvanized steel. Blair removed the fill hole, cone and ladder, then bolted the tank sideways onto the trailer frame. He used an 8-ft. length of 38-in. wide, 3/4-in. thick plywood to make the floor and very thin plywood to form the walls and ceiling. To form the walls he spaced 1 by 4's 18 in. apart from the floor all the way up to a plywood ceiling that installed on top of the tank, and then ran screws into the 1 by 4's from the outside. He installed 1/2-in. thick, R-30 Styrofoam between the 1 by 4's, and then placed 4 by 8-ft. thin panels against the 1 by 4's and stapled them on.

Curved metal bracing salvaged from the ladder was used to make a frame that supports the plexiglass window on front of the camper.



Four 3-gal. metal buckets on back of camper contain red reflectors that look like afterburners.

"It was very awkward to work inside the tank until the floor was installed because you always had to stand at an angle. But it turned out nice. Even though I'm 6 ft. tall I still have 2 to 3 in. of head clearance," says Stracener.

Blair mounted a big hinged storage box on the trailer tongue just ahead of the camper. He made a "porch" at the back of the trailer by cutting up the ladder and bolting various parts onto the trailer floor to form handrails. Portable fold-down steps lead up into the trailer.

The bucket afterburners are screwed to the camper's back wall. "When you're driving behind the camper at night, the red reflectors look a lot like flames," says Stracener.

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