

## Long-Legged Pouter Pigeons

English Pouter Pigeons stand 16 1/2 in. tall, half of which is leg. The 1-lb., 3-oz birds are known for their long legs, enlarged crop or globe, and their docile attitude.

"They are great pets and will follow you around outside," says Ron Lane, a nationally recognized breeder. "They are loving, gentle birds. The old English monks first bred them hundreds of years ago."

Lane has been breeding them since 1965 when, as a 10th grade student, he talked a breeder out of 3 pairs. His 2018 reserve National Champion English Pouter Pigeon suggests he knows what he is doing. However, Lane says it isn't easy.

"They are difficult to breed, and you never know if you'll get a good one," he says. "At the same time, you can breed one with faults, and it might later produce a perfect bird. What I bred this year is as close to perfection as I've done."

One problem with the birds is their long legs. Lane notes that they will often kick their eggs out of the nest accidentally. He uses other pigeons to foster the English Pouter Pigeon eggs.

Currently he is one of only 3 large breeders in the U.S. He notes that there are more in Europe, especially in Germany and Croatia. He has imported breeding stock from these other countries, but notes it can run into thousands of dollars for a single bird.

Lane currently sells individual birds for \$100, but sometimes sells them for less. His



**English Pouter Pigeons are known for their long legs, enlarged crop, and gentle personality.**

price depends on how many he has on hand and how many he wants to part with. Out of the 100 pigeons he currently has, 60 of them are English Pouters.

"Once you fool with them, they get in your blood," says Lane. "I've had every breed of pigeon there is in this country, but I always come back to the Pouters. They are my favorites."

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## Radio Controls Bring Toys To Life

Robert Denson stops crowds in their tracks at farm toy shows when his 1/16 scale models start moving. Equipped with electric motors, miniature gears, hydraulics, and radio receivers, they work like real equipment, raising and lowering implements, augers and more.

"Inevitably someone at a show will try to pick the models apart," says Denson. "They'll ask, 'Can it do this or can it do that?' Then I show them it can."

Denson's first car and truck models were carved from 2 by 4 lumber when he was growing up on an Arkansas farm. His first motorized model was a plastic, Bigfoot Monster model truck his dad put together. "I thought it would be cool if it moved, so I took motors out of a couple old hair dryers and some small gears and attached them to the wheels," he recalls. "It ran on D cell batteries."

After Denson joined the Army, his first duty station was in Germany, where he discovered radio-controlled (RC) toys. When he returned to the U.S. he renewed his hobby, at first buying 1/16-scale toys.

"I realized they weren't accurate," he says. "They lacked detail."

Having operated farm equipment for a neighbor as a teenager, Denson knew the detail that was missing. In 1991 he built his first from-scratch Deere 9610 combine out of wood, with all the exterior features of a real combine.

"I took it to a toy show in 1992, and I could have sold it 10 times over," says Denson.

Over the next few months he motorized it with a gear head from a battery-powered screwdriver and a toggle switch for going backward and forward. The response at a second toy show in early 1993 encouraged him to keep going. By that fall he had it fully radio-controlled with a rotating reel, rotating auger and a header that could be raised or lowered. It had a better drive system, a swing-out auger, cab lights and other details built into the cab and engine.

Since then, Denson has continued refining

and expanding his list of RC models, some scratch-built and others modified from commercial 1/16-scale toys. He gets help from local equipment dealers who appreciate his skills.

"They'll call me to let me know a new model has come in and I might want to take a look," he says. "I'll take detailed pictures down to how many bolts are holding the axles together."

That information comes in handy when he is building. "If I can't make a model look like the real thing, I won't," says Denson.

His favorite model is a radio-controlled, AGCO Terra-Gator 8103 he built from scratch. He still recalls the first day he saw one in a field and realized he was hooked. While on guard duty at an airport after 9/11, he saw a man with an AGCO jacket. Denson, carrying an automatic rifle, stopped him.

"He told me he would give me anything I wanted," laughs Denson. "I told him what I wanted to do. He was an engineer and later supplied me with 3D drawings, which I sized to match some truck tires I already had."

As with his other models, this one required a lot of patience as he tried to find parts. He gets about 75 percent of parts from Europe, often fabricating what he can't find.

"There are no suppliers of miniature hydraulic parts, pistons, motors or pumps in the U.S.," says Denson. "You have to figure out where to get things and how to modify them. When I was building the Terra-Gator, I needed some leather strips for the steps. One day I walked through the ladies shoe section at Wal-Mart and saw a pair with leather straps that were perfect, so I bought them, just for the straps."

For the Terra-Gator he found a source for a miniature liquid hydraulic system. It controls the booms, wrapping and unwrapping them, as well as lifting and lowering them. He also equipped the Terra-Gator with lights, a truck sound system and a detailed driver's cab with the letters and markings of the full-size spreader.

"It took nearly a year to complete," recalls



**John Crofoot bought this 1928 Ford Model A tractor, which had been put together using a Sears kit that converted the Model A car to a tractor.**

## Thrifty Farmer Tractor

With a \$100 kit, a few basic tools and an old Model A or T, farmers could make their own tractors in the '30s during the Depression. Though they only moved at speeds up to 4 mph, the tractors were economical and useful for farming.

"They could do the work of 2 to 4 horses, and tractors don't get tired," says John Crofoot, who has owned two kit-conversion tractors.

The Michigan collector sold his first one, a 1925 Ford Model T Chassis with a Sears conversion kit, to an Illinois Sears tractor collector.

For the time being, Crofoot plans on hanging on to his 1928 Ford Model A tractor he purchased in 2014.

"In 25 years, I've only seen 4 or 5 of them," Crofoot says. His tractor was in good

condition when he bought it.

The Sears kit that converted the Model A to a tractor was called Thrifty Farmer. Sears was one of the first companies to get into tractor conversion kits.

"The kits were designed so there was no welding. They just cut things, and it bolted to a car frame," he explains. The kit included the framework, axles, wheels and gears in the wheel. While the bigger wheels reduced the mph, it gave the tractor better traction and ground clearance.

The tractor Crofoot purchased had spade lugs on the rear wheels, which he removed and replaced with rubber tread to avoid damaging his trailer.

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**Denson's 1/16-scale, remote-controlled farm toys are equipped with electric motors, miniature gears, hydraulics, and radio receivers to work like real equipment.**



**His favorite model is a radio-controlled AGCO Terra-Gator 8103. Photo at right shows a model crop duster parked in front of a real airplane hangar.**

Denson. "It still pleases crowds at shows."

Over the years Denson has assembled a collection of more than 30 RC models, including a Caterpillar 140H motor grader with full motion blade and a 4-WD Deere tractor with a planter that lifts and lowers. A semi trailer pulls up to combines that extend their augers, and other tractors pull a plow and a disk that lift and lower.

Occasionally, he will put one of his models on the market. He has sold non RC combine models for \$1,200 each. He recently put his cotton module truck on the market.

"One of the hardest things is how to price these models," says Denson. "It could go

anywhere from \$1,500 on up."

While Denson has built RC models to order, he prefers doing them for himself and entertaining others at toy shows.

"I enjoy doing this as a hobby and encouraging others to build their own," he says. "If someone calls, I can spend hours talking about how to do things. There are a lot of guys with this hobby, and we share ideas on what to use and how to do it."

Check out the video at farmshow.com.

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