

Traveling Welder Ready To Fix Anything

“When things break down on a farm, I’m there to put ‘em back together,” says Wisconsin’s traveling welder Jerry Hubert. “In 2014 I heard that a couple of guys doing this were retiring, so I jumped in where they left off because farmers always seem to need something fixed.”

With Wisconsin being the dairy capital of the Midwest, Hubert is often called on to repair stanchions, stalls and bunks, or to build gates for big dairies.

Hubert has more than 32 years welding experience including steel, brass, copper and poly. In his shop he re-faces worn out loader buckets, builds new ones, and makes huge metal feed scoops. His mobile trailer has 8 different welders and he travels 100 miles in any direction when customers call.

“If stall dividers or stanchions break, I usually can weld them or make new brackets to support the good pieces,” Hubert says. He makes cattle gates out of schedule 40 steel that he says should last 20 years or more.

He’s an expert at repairing stainless piping and also has the equipment to weld poly tanks, chutes or bunks.

“A lot of people think a leaking tank or cracked bunk is junk, but I’m able to fix cracked poly and make it as good or better than new,” Hubert says. He even repaired a cracked poly slide on a child’s play set that the parents were ready to throw away.

“Most times it’s easier and more economical to repair things rather than buy new,” Hubert says, and his pricing reflects that attitude. “I understand when times are tough because I’m out here among my customers every day.” Farmers and commercial customers also bring broken equipment to his shop, where he and his wife teach their 14, 12 and 10-year-old children welding as part of their home-school curriculum. His 14-year-old son hopes to be a certified welder by age 16 and build his own business.

“In a few years I’ll be ready to slow down and hopefully he’ll be able to pick up some



Wisconsin welder Jerry Hubert will travel 100 miles in any direction when customers call.

of the slack,” Hubert says.

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“Cheese Nights” Pay Off At This Goat Farm

Terrell Creek Farm, owned by Lesley and Barry Million in Fordland, Mo., is known for its artisan goat cheeses.

Lesley and Barry have been milking dairy goats since 2007, and they went commercial in 2012. Today, they milk a herd of 38 goats (primarily Nubian) to create their artisan cheeses. “The previous two years we milked 50 goats,” said Lesley. “We’ve worked on improving our breeding program, so we get more milk from fewer goats.” Terrell Creek Farm goat cheese can be found at numerous local farmers markets, restaurants and grocery stores.

What’s more, Lesley and Barry have been hosting “Cheese Night” events on their farm since 2017. That year they held two events. In 2018, they held one a month from May through October and 2019 is their second full year of hosting these fun and tasty farm

events. “I kept seeing all these lovely cheese boards online,” said Lesley. “My degree is in art education and I thought, ‘I can do that. That looks like fun.’ We always have customers interested in coming out to the farm to see where their cheese is made and meet the goats who produce the milk. Being a working farm, it’s hard to accommodate visitors sometimes. We decided this would be a way for customers to see the farm and also a way for us to make a little extra money.”

Tickets to Terrell Creek Farm’s events are \$35, and include live music from local artists, a chance to mingle with the dairy goats, and all the goat cheese, charcuterie and other finger foods you can eat. Some of the artisan cheeses that grace the buffet tables are Herb and Garlic Chevre, Feta, The Dude (a cousin to Brie), Chimney Rock and many others. Goat milk ice cream also frequently makes



Lesley and Barry Million serve artisan goat cheeses at “Cheese Night” events they host at their Fordland, Mo., dairy goat farm.

an appearance.

“The Cheese Nights have definitely been profitable for us. In addition to that, they’re a good way for us to really connect with our customers and to recharge ourselves. It’s nice to see people enjoying themselves and to hear positive feedback and appreciation for what

we do. It reminds us of why we do what we do!” says Lesley.

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“Made It Myself” Chicken Plucker Speeds Up Processing

By Klaire Howerton

My husband and I raise a batch of Cornish cross meat chickens every year on our 6-acre Green Thicket Farm near Springfield, Missouri, for our own use and for our Omnivore CSA program. I grew up on a farm and my parents also raised Cornish cross every summer, so I have spent many years plucking chickens by hand. This year, my neighbors Sasha and Jimmy Rhea of Rhea Farm in Fair Grove, Missouri, came to my rescue and loaned us their homebuilt chicken plucker!

After researching DIY plucker options online, Jimmy decided instead of purchasing the plans to build one, he would study pictures and design one of his own. Using a plastic 55-gal. drum he found on the side of the road and cut in half, a 1/2 hp. electric motor, pulleys, a belt, 1/2-in. shaft and ball bearings, 2 by 4 lumber and rubber fingers ordered online, he built a durable and handy machine.

The plastic drum with rubber fingers attached sits in a wooden frame fastened together with lag bolts – “I wanted it to be sturdy,” said Jimmy. The motor is fastened to the outside of the frame with 7/16 all thread bolts; these were used to secure the belt tensioner as well. The motor runs at about 1000 rpm’s, but the plucker itself

only needs to run at about 100 rpm’s, so Jimmy used pulleys to get the ratio right. A small pulley is attached to the motor and a large pulley is attached to the drum of the plucker. Blocks of wood and rod iron keep the motor stable, and a 1/2-in. shaft and ball bearing keep the plucker turning. Jimmy also installed an electric outdoor box switch to conveniently turn the plucker on and off.

We covered the motor with a 5-gal. bucket to keep it dry during use. The plucker works best with 2 to 3 chickens in it at a time, two if the birds were larger and three if they were on the smaller side. To operate it, we put the scalded chickens into the drum and turned the unit on for approximately 30 to 45 seconds while manually running a hose over the chickens to wash the feathers off. The tumbling action with the rubber fingers combined with the water from the hose made for nice clean birds with only a few feathers left to finish plucking! Using the unit cut our processing time in half, gave us a much nicer finished product than plucking by hand, and made us very grateful for our wonderful neighbors!

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Jimmy Rhea made this chicken plucker out of a plastic 55-gal. drum that sits inside a wooden frame. A 1/2 hp. electric motor belt-drives the drum, which has rubber fingers attached inside.