

## YOU CAN RAISE A BIG HERD OF THEM IN A GARAGE

# Snail "Ranching" Catching On Fast

Are you looking for a new farm enterprise? If so, here's one you can run out of a garage or any small farm building.

"Snail ranching is still mostly a curiosity in the Midwest, but it's starting to catch on," says Shane Farnsworth, founder of U.S. Snail, a 6-month old snail-growing enterprise based in Omaha, Neb.

U.S. Snail has been running ads in Midwestern farm magazines in the hope of attracting enough snail ranchers so it can offer a steady fresh supply of "escargot" to restaurants. The U.S. imported 787,772 pounds of canned snails last year, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Much of that came from Taiwan, Farnsworth says. There, snails grow to the size of softballs and are chopped into little pieces that resemble the smaller brown snails chefs prefer. Most of the rest came from France, he says, which exports lower-quality chopped-up Giant African snails instead of the gourmet snails that country is known for.

So neither major source of snails provides the U.S. with the fresh whole snail variety restaurant owners and chefs want to offer their customers, he says.

"Professional snail ranching has tremendous potential because demand is high and supply is low," he says.

U.S. Snail provides breeding snails in lots of 250 for \$625 to beginning ranchers. The company also provides technical, marketing and research support.

Starting equipment includes several 1 by 2 by 3-ft. humidified plastic tubs with flower pots of soil inside. Snails thrive in 68° temperatures, 90% humidity and 9 1/2 hours of daylight, Farnsworth says. Many



growers find garages make perfect "confinement barns" for snails, he says.

Each snail lays 50 to 100 eggs in the soil. (Snails have both male and female sex genes so they all lay eggs.) Eggs hatch in 21 days and are market ready in seven months. A market snail weighs 8 to 10 grams and is about 1 1/4 in. long. Snails have a lifespan of four to five years.

In two breeding cycles over 16 months about 500,000 snails will be produced, he says. Live snails can fetch as much as 60 cents apiece, so potential revenue is as much as \$300,000 in 16 months, he says.

Besides selling them on local markets, snails can also be shipped live to markets outside of a local area or sold to distributors, he adds.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, U.S. Snail, 9755 Q Street, Suite 226, Omaha, Neb. 68127 (ph 402 597-6898).

(Lincoln Star).



## "Grain Bin In A Bag"

If you have to store grain on the ground this year, you might want to get in touch with Linda Dzen.

A Russian-born mechanical engineer who immigrated to Canada four years ago, Dzen has designed a new reusable grain bag made of stretchable vinyl that provides bin-type protection to stored grain.

Dzen's covers are made of pie-shaped pieces of vinyl sewn into a circle. Four 7-ft., 8-in. pipes stand on a plate inside the bottom of the bag to hold it up. A metal ring runs around the top of the pipes. The grain auger spout fits inside the ring for filling. The bottom of the bag is anchored with spikes. Velcro fasteners hold the bag's three main seams shut.

A cover for barley or wheat consists of 19 pie-shaped pieces sewn into a circle 33-ft. in dia. It holds 2,500 bu. of barley or wheat and 3,200 bu. of oats.

Sells for \$550 (Canadian). Other sizes available on custom basis.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joe Hoffer Enterprises, Box 1204, Weyburn, Sask., Canada S4H 2L5 (ph 306 842-3769).

Metal cage made of pipes stands inside grain bag.



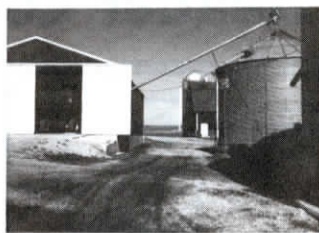
## Shop Dump Pit Speeds Up Grain-Hauling

"I was spending a lot of time hauling grain home and I wanted to streamline the process," says Terry Bell.

In 1993, the Hopkinton, Iowa, farmer found a way to cut unloading time down to virtually nothing by putting a pit under one end of his new shop.

"The 800-bu. grain pit is under the west end of the 32 by 60-ft. shop," explains Bell. "The shop is close to my 6-ft. holding bin and 27-ft. drying bin. It used to take 20 or 25 minutes to unload each load into an 8-in. auger. Now I just dump the whole load into the 12 by 12-ft. pit.

"I had 14 by 20-ft. doors installed on both ends of the shop so I can drive in from either side with the tractor, unload, and drive right out the other end in a minute or two. I don't have to wait around until the pit clears, since I have an automatic shut-off, controlled by an electric eye, on the



pit. The eye automatically shuts off the switch on the auger when it determines there is no more grain in the pit.

"A 26-ft., 8-in. auger carries grain out of the pit and through the side of the shop wall to a 38-ft. auger that carries grain up to the bins."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Terry Bell, R.R. 2, Box 105, Hopkinton, Iowa 52237 (ph 319 926-2328).

## Their Bug Business Is Big Business

Business has never been better, say producers of farm bugs who supply a variety of insects for farmers and farm researchers.

"Pest control options are becoming limited as cities extend out into farming areas," says Jackie Dann, who supplies tiny wasps that control fly populations around livestock facilities.

Dann gets her tiny stingless wasps from Arizona Biological Control Inc. The wasps lay eggs inside fly pupae. The developing wasp kills and eats the developing fly and then lays its own eggs inside other fly pupae to repeat the cycle.

The naturally-occurring wasps are host-specific, they don't swarm, and they burrow into the ground, so you don't even know they're around, she says.

Her main customers are feedlot owners, who use the wasps to kill flies from May to September, and poultry and hog producers, who use them year around.

It takes one package, or 80,000 wasps, per thousand head of cattle to provide adequate control. A package costs \$30 (Canadian), so it works out to about 50 or 60 cents per head.

The wasps are shipped via courier in a white bag filled with wood shavings they nest in. One package is put out immediately, the other is refrigerated and put out two weeks later.

Another bug producer, Lee French, of French Agricultural Research near

Lamberton, Minn., says his business increases every year. In fact, he and his wife, Joann, plan to put up a second insectary soon and branch out into other insects.

The Frenches currently grow corn rootworms and European corn borers, which they supply to researchers at universities and seed and chemical companies.

They have more than 200 regular customers and produce as many as 150 million corn rootworm eggs and 3 million corn borer egg masses a year, as well as smaller quantities of other insects. These include corn ear worms, black cutworms, tobacco budworms and tobacco hornworms.

The Frenches average 25 egg shipments per week during winter and up to 75 per week during the corn-growing season.

Their biggest-ever sale was over 25 million corn rootworm eggs; smallest 1,000 eggs. Price per thousand drops as order size increases. Their lowest price is \$2,000 per million.

The Frenches plan to raise cabbage loopers, fall armyworms and beet armyworms in their new insectary. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Manibico Biological Ltd., Box 17, Group 242, R.R. 2, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3C 2E6 (ph 204 697-0868) or French Agricultural Research, R.R. 2, Box 294, Lamberton, Minn. 56152 (ph 507 752-7274). (Western Producer, Soybean Digest)

## Plastic Splints Get Weak Newborns On Their Feet

"They put an even amount of pressure on the legs of newborn calves without creating any pressure sores either," says Ulf Herde about the leg splints he makes out of plastic pipe.

The 2 in. dia. PVC pipe braces he uses work on either front or rear legs, says Herde who first tried the splints two years ago. Since then, he's used them on four calves.

For front legs, Herde uses a piece of pipe about 6 in. long and split down the middle lengthwise. He wraps the leg with a piece of old bluejean, careful not to use the seams. He then slips the pipe over the cloth and wraps it with electrical tape.

For rear legs, Herde uses the same procedure with a piece of pipe that's about 9 in. long because tendons are longer on the rear than the front.

"I usually leave them on for three days



on the front legs - less if the calf is getting around well," Herde says. "On rear legs it takes a little longer because of the longer tendons. The idea should also work on broken legs."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ulf Herde, Box 222, Ardmore, Alberta, Canada T0A 0B0 (ph 403 826-1959).