



Little Grey Fergie is featured in a series of books, videos and movies created in Norway.

## Little Grey Fergie Loved By Kids, Adults

"The Ferguson tractor has always had a soul. The only thing was the eyes were missing," says Morten Myklebust, creator of Little Grey Fergie, hero of a series of books, videos, movies and even a theme park in Norway. Fergie is not a cartoon - he is a very real 1952 Ferguson tractor that moves driverless on its own with headlight eyes turning in every direction. First seen on T-shirts in 1995, Fergie has gone on many adventures since - most of the time saving old treasures on his farm from pesky scrap dealers.

The 2 to 5-year-old children Myklebust had in mind when he brought Fergie to life love the little grey tractor and the toys, games, clothing and other items derived from it. But so do adults who want to pass on good work and life values to children.

"Fergie started because we did not like the children's programs on Norwegian TV in the late 90's when our son was a little boy," says Anne Thovsen, producer for Fergie videos. She and Myklebust, who had careers in graphic design, cartoons and writing, wanted to create a character of their own. "We also wanted to share values of farming and food, and it meshed together."

After selling their popular T-shirts, the couple produced books and episodes for a Norwegian public TV station. Later they made movies and put short teasers on YouTube. Fergie's co-stars include farm animals, Farmer George, Daisy the farmhand, Clunky the robot, Gramps and Hubert and Hieronemus the inept, villain scrap dealers.

They sold licensing rights for a company to open the amusement park Fergie Land

in 2014 and were invited to Disneyland in 2015 to accept a Themed Entertainment Association Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement.

"It's edutainment," Myklebust says. "You have fun but learn without knowing you are learning."

There are lessons about being proud of who you are, that everyone has a role, that you don't throw away old friends - like an old tractor.

The Ferguson tractor is treasured in Norway and much of Europe and some older adults who collect and restore them appreciate Fergie for giving them and their grandchildren a common interest. That includes fans in North America, who pay more for shipping than the clothing, toys and items they order from the couple in Norway.

"Our goal is to make more shows, books and toys for all children and families worldwide that build on good values and entertainment," Thovsen says.

The couple is negotiating with a distribution company to make their products less expensive and more available in North America in the near future. They also plan to produce a whole season of episodes for television.

You can see for yourself at YouTube. Just search: Little Grey Fergie.

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## Corn Maze Created Without GPS

Strom's Farm and Bakery in Ontario, Canada, has all kinds of attractions from wagon rides to pedal tractor races. But for many, the fall highlight is the 6-acre corn maze, which includes over 5 kilometers of paths.

Unlike most corn mazes, the Strom's make theirs without the use of GPS. "When we started in 2002, we wanted to figure out how to do it ourselves without expensive CAD and GPS software that we couldn't justify," says Channing Strom.

Strom explains: "All we needed was a spreadsheet program and a planter with consistent row spacing. We pull logos into a spreadsheet that has been narrowed to a square grid. We fill in with paths that follow the grid. This gets printed off on a plotter with the grid lines numbered in the background."

Tall, long-season field corn is then planted in a square grid pattern at half the normal population in each direction. Once the corn reaches 6 to 8 in. tall, staff can count rows from the printout and mark paths using baseball diamond chalk. A crew of about 10 students is then put to work hoeing out these marked paths.

On average, it takes 6 hrs. to create about



Strom's uses a simple spreadsheet to map out corn mazes.

2 1/2 miles of paths within the 6-acre maze. And, as corn is in the grass family, each stalk will continue to grow and requires several rounds of mowing to die back completely.

Overall, this low-tech solution has proven successful. "We get to within 15 in. accuracy in the middle of the field," says Strom, "pretty good for the simplicity of it."

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## Kansas Town's Murals Boost Tourism

Clay Center, Kansas, has a new attraction garnering national attention - a series of more than a dozen murals celebrating the community's rural heritage.

These larger-than-life art installments, known collectively as "A Mural Movement," started out as a local Rotary project by club President Brett Hubka to encourage more tourism to the town. The plan was to complete one or two smaller murals to attract interest and see how the community responded.

The town's first mural, which portrayed a sunflower composed of Kansas license plates, inspired community support for a more significant art movement. More than \$150,000 in donations poured in and so far over 13 artists have been involved with designing and painting the city's outdoor art.

Murals range from Americana motifs to art that celebrates Kansas's rural heritage. The largest mural to date, on the Key Feeds feed mill, covers approximately 7,000 sq. ft. and took a team of 5 artists 2 weeks to complete.

"Initially, finding locations was the biggest hurdle," shares Hubka. "Thankfully, many businesses took a chance on us and allowed us to do some of our initial murals on their walls." Now, interest has grown to the point that a tier system determines where each new mural will be located. Whether businesses have a say in the final art depends on how much funding they put towards its cost. Some fully fund the project, while others donate the space and A Mural Movement's committee designs and



Clay Center, Kansas is using murals on local structures to attract visitors.

funds the concept.

It's Clay Center's hope that these murals will attract more people to the region to experience what makes it special. "These murals have allowed us to showcase our town like we never have been able to before," shares Hubka. "When doing the mural tour, visitors are not only able to enjoy our free public art but are also able to see our local free zoo, parks, shops, and wonderful restaurants." Each mural also includes a scannable QR code that provides information about the art and displays a map of the other installations.

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## Adopt Feral Cats for Barnyard Pest Control

Looking for cats to take care of rodents in your barns and other outbuildings? Consider employing the services of Barn Cats, Inc. to give "non-adoptable" city cats a new lease on life. Based in Dallas, Texas, this rescue organization rehomes nuisance feral cats into safe barns, warehouses, sheds, back patios, and other suitable spaces throughout North Texas.

Founder Peggy Atkerson has been in the cat rescue business for over 30 years and says their service could be duplicated in other areas of the country. For the first decade, she focused on standard adoptions throughout Lewisville, Texas. One day, a feral mother cat and kittens showed up. The mom was too wild to place for adoption, so Peggy advertised her as a barn cat. To her surprise, a local newspaper picked up the story and the cat found a home.

The feral cat adoption side of her services soon snowballed, and Peggy established a 501c3 nonprofit to scale up her operation. To date, Barn Cats, Inc. has placed over 8,000 cats in 37 North Texas counties and 5 Oklahoma counties. "We understand that not all these cats will survive on a farm or ranch," says Peggy. "But most would end up in city shelters where none would survive. We are giving them a second chance."

To receive a barn cat, you must own a barn, shed, or another secure shelter that can be closed up to protect the cats from predators and someone must live on the property full time or visit daily.

All cats in the program are fixed, fully vetted, and receive rabies and distemper shots before becoming eligible for adoption.

Most people adopt 3 cats at a time, as one will almost always disappear upon release.



Barn Cats book "Got Rats? We Have Cats" describes the process for setting up a feral cat adoption service.

Adopting 3 offers a better guarantee that you won't be left cat-less.

Those interested in adoptions can call 972 742-5238 or email info@barncats.org after reviewing the website www.barncats.org. Adoptions are free, although tax-deductible donations are requested.

Interested in starting your own barn cat rehoming program? The book *Got Rats? We Have Cats* outlines the process for establishing a successful rescue. All proceeds from the book go to support Barn Cats, Inc.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Barn Cats, Inc., PO Box 12642, Dallas, Texas 75225 (ph 972 742-5238; info@barncats.org; www.barncats.org).