

## “Country Style” Mountain Climbing

An old concrete stave silo on a farm near Peck, Kan., is serving as a “mountain” for some boy scouts.

Members of Troop 509, of Wichita, wanted to practice mountain climbing but didn't have a handy mountain in flat south central Kansas. So, they came up with the idea of doing their practice climbing on an abandoned silo on the Nixon farm, located about half an hour from Wichita.

“It works real well,” Scout Mark Bolar told FARM SHOW. “It's good practice, especially for rappelling (descending by means of a double rope) because it's a good, even surface and you can come down fast. It takes us about 2 min. to climb up.” Bolar, had climbed large, steep mountains in Colorado and other places before suggesting the silo idea.

The old silo is not used to store feed anymore. It's 25 ft. in dia. and about 45 ft. high. Practice climbing doesn't do any damage to the silo, but you have to practice with an empty silo because climbing gear has to be tied to the top. “Climbing a silo can be more difficult than actual mountain climbing because there are no natural hand holds,” explains Bolar.

Mountain climbing gear needed includes a good climbing rope, a mountaineering harness, some carabiners, a rappelling device and a couple of slings. Bolar and his fellow scouts signed forms releasing the owner of the silo from liability should an accident happen. Otherwise, insurance would be wise on the part of the silo owner, Bolar points out.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mark Bolar, 24 Norfolk St., Wichita, Kan. 67208 (ph 316 685-4559).



Using conventional mountain climbing gear, it takes climbers about 2 min. to scale the 45 ft. silo.



Scottish deer farmer's pastured deer reach market weight of 180 lbs. at about 18 months of age.

### CATCHING ON FAST IN OTHER COUNTRIES

## Deer Farming: Would It Fit Your Farm Or Ranch?

Deer farming is catching on fast with farmers in Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom countries of England, Scotland and Wales.

Does it offer similar profit opportunities for farmers in the U.S. and Canada?

To find out, FARM SHOW questioned Scottish deer consultant Colin Young, of Kincardineshire, about the “ins” and “outs” of raising deer commercially. Young is an international leader in the deer farming movement, having served as a special advisor on deer farming for the Scottish extension service for more than 4 years. He raises deer himself, helps farmers set up deer-farming operations, does feasibility studies, and designs farm layouts and handling systems.

**Where do farmers get start-up stock and how many deer do they need?** The best stock comes from other deer farms or wildlife parks. It's worth paying a premium for fence-tamed stock that's accustomed to eating supplementary feed. You can start with any number.

**What type of land is best for deer?** Most any land is fine, providing there is water and shelter from the worst weather. As a general rule, land that will feed three sheep will feed two deer, and many deer farmers make use of poor or inconvenient parts of their farm that have not been productive in the past. However, deer do ex-

ceptionally well on good pasture.

**Can deer be raised in feedlot confinement?** Deer are being raised in feedlot-type confinement or “drylot” and there do not appear to be any special problems. More research needs to be done in this area, however.

**What kind of fence is needed to hold deer?** High tensile fence at least 6 ft. high is recommended. Some existing fences can be modified, or deer fences made in New Zealand can be used. Fence must be strong since farmed deer are more likely to push through a fence than try to jump over it.

**How long does it take for deer to reach maturity?** Market weight of about 180 lbs. has been reached in 7 to 10 months under intensive conditions, but 15 to 18 months is normal. Stags kept for breeding will reach more than 300 lbs. The breeding cycle starts in the autumn when females come into heat and males start to rut. It's controlled by day length and cannot be altered. Eight months later, in early summer, the young are born. Practically all females will breed successfully provided nutrition is adequate. They start breeding at 2 years of age and continue for 10 years or more.

**What do you feed deer?** Most farmers graze their deer, supplementing diets with hay, silage, commercial feeds, and waste grain, potatoes, tur-

nips, etc. Due to their years in the wild, most deer lose their appetite in the winter.

**What health problems do deer have?** We're finding that deer are resistant to most diseases of sheep and cattle. Roundworms and lungworms, can be a problem but they're easily cured by normal veterinary treatment.

**How do most farmers market their deer?** Some have been very successful butchering and marketing the deer themselves while others sell to local meat processors. Deer carcasses have a high percentage of prime cuts — about 30% — and venison is attractive to consumers as a low-fat meat. Farmed venison tends to be tender and mildly flavored.

**What permits are required?** FARM SHOW checked with Minnesota officials. Whether you raise one deer or 1,000, they report, you need a game farm permit which costs \$10. There are specific regulations that apply if the farm is a “petting zoo” type place

for tourists. You must be able to prove where the deer on your farm were obtained.

It is illegal to trap deer from the wild in Minnesota and there is no permit structure to allow it. They can only be purchased from other game farms or zoos. According to a DNR spokesman, most Minnesota deer farms are aimed at tourists, rather than selling venison.

For more information on deer farming, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Colin Young Deer Farming Services, Strathview, The Square, Auchinblae, Laurencekirt, Kincardineshire, AB3 1XR, United Kingdom.

Another good source of information is the British Deer Farmers' Association, which publishes a monthly newsletter for \$15. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, British Deer Farmers Association, Peter Crichton, Kingenclough Cottage, Mauchline, Ayrshire, United Kingdom.