

Over three years, Sparky De Ruyter meticulously created a scale model of his Southwestern Minnesota home farm.



## His Farmstead Replica Is Now A Museum Piece

Bowing to progress, Midwestern rural farmsteads from 75 to 90 years ago have mostly disappeared or been expanded and modernized. The 1940s De Ruyter farmstead, however, is completely preserved as a tabletop scale model replica, now housed in a museum in Pipestone, Minn. Sparky De Ruyter produced the masterpiece after he retired, working countless hours over more than three years in his basement woodshop.

De Ruyter spent his first 20 years growing up on his parent's Pipestone County, Minn., farm. Memories of that time left an indelible mark. After military duty, he married and became a lifetime machinist, but his hobby was always woodworking. De Ruyter's daughter Trish Mayer says her father enjoyed his hobby of building first-rate cabinetry, furniture, shelving and other items like quilt racks, crosses and fully-equipped playhouses. At one point, he made a model of the farm where a son-in-law was raised. That was such a hit that he decided to produce a model of the farm where he grew up.

Always a stickler for detail, De Ruyter first reproduced the scale-model barn, completing it when he was 76. He used old photos and aerial pictures of the farmstead for reference. The barn's exterior was authentic, with a hay mow door, hayrack, trim around every window and even wood shingles. A peek inside revealed scaled-down wooden stanchions, cow dividers, a wooden water tank and carefully crafted pens. The completed project drew such rave reviews from family members that he decided to build

out the whole farmsite.

The large white farmhouse had authentic windows, the windmill resembled the farm's original version, and other outbuildings were recreated to scale and size. Even the smallest items like the mailbox, a boot scraper at the house's doorstep, wooden clothes pins on the line, a doghouse, 3-ft. tall fences, trees and a junk pile were hand-crafted to scale. De Ruyter even made cattle and sheep for the yard and farm equipment like tractors and a threshing machine.

Mayer says her dad made over 2,000 shingles for the farm buildings and meticulously laid them in place. His son-in-law David Mayer says De Ruyter was always excited to show family members new additions to the project, but he didn't want recognition beyond that. His daughter says her dad completed the project in 2009. It sat in the basement of his house and was eventually disassembled and moved to the house where his wife Shirley moved when he entered a nursing home.

The family asked him where the model should go, and he said it would be a nice fit for a museum. The Pipestone, Minn., museum accepted the offer, and the family moved it there. Five people reassembled it, and it's now displayed at the museum in a building that was previously the Pipestone Town Hall.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pipestone County Museum, 113 S. Hiawatha Ave., Pipestone, Minn. 56164 (ph 507-825-2563; museum@pipestonecountymuseum.com; www.pipestonecountymuseum.com).



Roof protection products penetrate the roof and claim to extend the life of shingles by 10 to 15 years and increase shingle flexibility by 50 percent.

## Soy Product Used To Rejuvenate Shingles

Treating shingles with roof products containing soybean oil can extend their life. The soy methyl ester emulsions (SMEE) moisturize asphalt shingles, keeping them from becoming brittle.

"I like the analogy that soy roof rejuvenates are like applying a lotion to your shingles to keep them moist and rejuvenate the oil that's in them, so the granules are preserved," says Becky Philipp, Agriculture Utilization Research Institute (AURI).

Philipp and others were quoted about SMEE benefits in a recent article in AURI Ag Innovation News. This past summer, AURI and the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council (MSR&PC) demonstrated applying roof preservation products from three companies. Roof Maxx, RoofRestor and Peak 301 all utilize SMEE in their products as a carrier for other components. However, SMEE, developed with United Soybean Board checkoff funds from soybean

# FARM SHOW



## The Gentle Barn Heals Humans And Animals Alike

By Lydia Noyes, Contributing Editor

Ellie Laks began The Gentle Barn nonprofit organization in 1999. The farm started as a half-acre property in California's San Fernando Valley but has since moved to a "6-acre paradise" in Santa Clarita, with a barnyard, horse and cow pastures, an organic vegetable garden, and plenty of shade trees. Over 200 rescue animals call it home, with many more residing at their Nashville and St. Louis locations. Along with standard barnyard inhabitants like horses, donkeys, sheep, chickens and cows, The Gentle Barn is also home to llamas, emus, peacocks and more.

The central mission of The Gentle Barn is to rescue animals who are otherwise too old, sick, lame or traumatized from severe abuse and neglect to live elsewhere. "We offer energy healing, music therapy, extra love and treats, and endless compassion to help them navigate their grief. It's our responsibility to ensure that animals have the opportunity to grieve and heal, just like we do. Together, we can create a world where all beings are cherished and supported through life's most difficult moments."

Beyond saving animals, The Gentle Barn aims to serve humans. Each location offers a variety of programs, many designed for adults and children dealing with abuse, addiction, depression, loneliness, and other physical or emotional pain. Program options include cow hug therapy, equine (and other animal) therapy and peace enhancement, literacy, arts and special needs programs.

As the name implies, cow hug therapy provides inner healing through connection with these gentle animals. "When given a



Cow hug therapy encourages inner healing through connection with these gentle animals.

chance to live and thrive in a safe, comforting environment, cows make amazing brothers, moms, friends and Cow Hug Therapy partners," says the organization. For \$200 a session, participants can lean against a cow's side, match its breathing, and release their lingering worries and tension. Likewise, the nonprofit's literacy program lets individuals practice their reading skills by reading out loud to a nonjudgemental audience of animals that enjoy the sounds of human voices. Time slots are available most days of the week and must be booked in advance.

The public can only visit the three locations on Sundays, though family and group tours can be arranged on other days. Financial aid is available to qualifying individuals who want to visit.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Gentle Barn Foundation, 15825 Sierra Hwy., Santa Clarita, Calif. 91390 (ph 661-252-2440; www.gentlebarn.org) or 9295 Christiana Fosterville Rd., Christiana, Tenn. 37037 or 9171 State Road Y, Dittmer, Mo. 63023.

grows, has been shown to have benefits in its own right.

"Companies are using soy methyl ester as the carrier for products, but it also puts back lost oil that's oxidized out of roofs," says Mike Youngerberg, MSR&PC. "It's the same concept as with asphalt roadside preservatives."

The roof protection products penetrate the roof and claim to extend the life of shingles by 10 to 15 years and increase shingle flexibility by 50 percent. Flexibility allows shingles to expand and contract without cracking and loss of granules. All three companies promise a minimum five-year warranty. Multiple treatments can be required depending on the age of the shingles and when products are applied. If shingle edges are curled or cracked, they may not qualify for treatment.

"You can apply this product many, many

times before you'd equal the cost of a total roof replacement," says Harold Stanislawski, AURI. "Replacing the shingles on a 1,800-sq. ft. roof can cost \$30,000 or more (costs vary by market, location and contractor) for new shingles and having the old hauled away."

Stanislawski explains that while the products have been commercially available, they haven't gotten the traction they deserve. He says the demonstration raised awareness.

"We found it really resonates with roof owners," says Stanislawski. "If you can get shingles to last another five to seven years with a \$1 or 1.75 per square foot treatment, that's a good deal."

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