

Vermont Farm Family Raises Fallow Deer

Hank Dimuzio and his wife Rhonda Roberts say raising fallow deer has been an excellent side business to utilize the woodland, pastureland, and cropland on their historic Middlebury, Vt., farm. An 8-ft. tall fence encloses about 100 acres where 600 fallow deer graze, raise their young, and grow. The couple markets the meat from about 100 to 120 animals a year directly to consumers, grocery stores, and restaurants. Dimuzio says venison is a high-dollar protein, and he adjusts his prices regularly to suit market demand, with an eye on his bottom line.

Dimuzio and Roberts weren't raised on a farm, but he and his wife decided in 1991, when he was an emergency room (ER) doctor, that they wanted to live on the land. "I guess that working in our family's 3/4-acre garden when I was young had a lasting effect on me," he says. Soon, Dimuzio and Roberts bought a historic dairy farm and named it LedgeEnd, after the bedrock edge of limestone that ends on the farm.

In 1995, they began raising fallow deer, choosing the animals because they didn't require much daily care, which fit Dimuzio's ER work schedule. "Milking



Mature fallow deer bucks have large palmated antlers similar to moose.

and higher care animals like goats were out of the question, and we do like deer, so that's the route we went," he says.

Fallow deer, native to Europe and Mesopotamia, are smaller than whitetails. Their coats

vary from light rust with fawn-like spots to deep burgundy. The male's antlers are broad, flat, and palmated, similar to their distant moose cousins. Females produce one fawn a year. They're typically disease-resistant and not susceptible to chronic wasting disease like the whitetail population.

Dimuzio and Roberts raise their deer in pastures and feed them hay and protein during winter months. Protein pellets have the added benefit of enticing deer to move into different pastures or the yard for sorting and culling. Dimuzio culls mature does from the herd when they're no longer producing fawns. They yield 45 to 50 lbs. of meat. He markets the bucks at 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 years old. They produce 70 to 90 lbs. of meat. They market the fine-grained, tender, and flavorful cuts directly to individual customers, grocery stores, and restaurants.

Dimuzio says fallow deer are naturally curious and generally easy to raise, except for young males. "They're skittish and dangerous to be around because of their sharp spike-like antlers. They can easily side kick 4 to 5 ft. high when they're nervous."

LedgeEnd's handling facility has lanes next to a building and outside walls nearly 10 ft.

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The CSA gave her access to 1/3 of an acre. The first crop was a learning experience. The second year went better. At the time, she was working as a baker in a restaurant noted for a chef/owner willing to experiment.

"When I told her what I was growing, she said she would buy everything I harvested," says Foreman.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, LedgeEnd Farm, 1288 Munger St., Middlebury, Vt. 05753 (www.Legendfarm.com).

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Heirloom Bean Biz Thrives On Just One Acre

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As her co-workers went on to other restaurants, her customer list grew. Her plot size also grew to a full acre, one of three she leases, allowing her to rotate beans to fresh ground each year.

Now in her 15th year on the leased land, 90 percent of her customer base has transitioned from restaurants to individual and farmers market customers. At harvest, she emails past customers about that year's varieties.

So far, the largest crop on her acre has been 400 lbs. of saleable beans. She plants, cultivates, and harvests by hand, picking individual pods. "Harvesting by pods keeps

the beans cleaner," says Foreman. "I fill a 5-gal. bucket and thresh them using a threaded rod with a propeller-type attachment at its end. As it spins around in the bucket, it splits open the pods without breaking beans."

She winnows them by pouring them into a box in front of a box fan. It blows away the lighter dry pods, and the heavier beans fall into a box.

Foreman has moved from wheel hoes to laying tarps between the rows for weed control. It has eliminated a lot of work, and she feels the bean plants are taller and stronger with more pods.

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"My average price for beans is \$9 per pound, but my market is accustomed to higher prices," says Foreman. "Those prices might not fly in another market."

While she wouldn't turn away new business, she does warn that existing customers are satisfied first. "I have loyal customers, some of whom have become friends, and between them and my farmers market customers, they take whatever I have," says Foreman.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Encore Farm, Paula Foreman (encorebeans@gmail.com; www.encore-farm.com).

beautiful, but if the description says nothing about flavor, it's a non-starter," she says. "If it doesn't taste good, why bother?"

She compares her freshly harvested beans to supermarket offerings. "You don't know how old they are," she says. "They can take forever to cook and have a mealy texture. Mine are soft and creamy."

Foreman prefers to buy seeds from small suppliers like Uprising Seeds, Adaptive Seeds, and Victory Seeds (Vol. 41, No. 2). "I save my own seeds for replanting, but when I try something new, I like small seed houses

them an award based on sales of the product."

The company website displays several products that have been developed through the Idea Program. One recent addition to the Lisle product line that came through the program is the Electrical Disconnect Plier. Tally says it was submitted a few years ago, but took time to get into production.

"We make most of our own tools, but our cost of manufacture for it was too high, and we had to go overseas," says Tally. "The inventor said it would sell, and we've had trouble keeping it on the shelf."



Electrical disconnect pliers.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lisle Corporation, P.O. Box 89, Clarinda, Iowa 51632 (ph 712-542-5101; www.lislecorp.com/idea-program).

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