

Kansas Ranch Raises Camels

Buffalos and a lion apparently were not enough so Ray O. Smith and sons Robert and Warren, Longford, Kansas, are establishing a camel herd on their 7,000-acre "exotic animal" ranch. Right in the middle of the wheat state!

"We got started with camels a couple of years ago when we went to an exotic animal sale in Missouri and bought Clyde, now a 4-year-old male," Robert told FARM SHOW.

Satisfied that Clyde liked ranch living and Kansas winters, the Smiths purchased Bonnie, a bred female, and a young camel heifer. Several weeks ago, Bonnie, an 8-year-old, gave birth to a calf, as yet unnamed.

The camels join a sizeable buffalo herd which is slowly replacing beef cows on the Smith ranch. "There's a market for exotics but zoos aren't the

place we'd sell to. We don't like the idea of animals being penned up like that," explains Robert.

The Smiths hope to get good money for their camels, once they have enough to sell. They note that at a recent exotic animal sale held in Cape Girardeau, Mo., a 6-month-old camel calf sold for \$4,000. The Smiths paid only \$1,500 for Clyde two years ago, which reflects how the price of camels has increased.

Clyde is now in a pasture with Sabrina. "She's 18 months old and mature enough to be bred," says Robert. "We hope she's bred already but don't have any way to tell for sure."

The Smith's lion is named Chester, and pals around with a dog named Blue.

The camels, at least Clyde, can be ridden, but isn't yet trained to lie down on the ground so you can climb



According to the Smiths, camel calves are in good demand, some selling for upwards of \$4,000.

on in the accepted camel-mounting fashion.

What do camels eat? "Their ration is comparable to that fed beef cattle and buffalo — hay, grain and protein. There's been no trouble so far with camel shipping fever or other sickness. In winter months, Clyde seems to like it outside, usually declining to come into the barn even on cold

winter days," says Robert. "He bosses the cattle and once herded 50 beef heifers into a corner. They just stood there without even trying to get away."

The camel calf recently born to Bonnie is doing fine. It nurses like a beef calf and weighed 70 lbs. when born.

ONE OF THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS EARNS \$60,000 A YEAR

Want To Be A Rodeo Clown?

Continually growing in popularity, rodeos need skilled performers, especially rodeo clowns to detract bulls after the bull rider has been thrown. One of the best bullfighting clowns in the business is Bob Donaldson, who makes \$750 per performance and earns up to \$60,000 a year.

Donaldson also is an instructor at the Sankey Rodeo School of Rose Hill, Kan., near Wichita. At the weekend school, operated by C. L. "Bud" Sankey and Ike Sankey, you can study not only bullfighting and clowning but also bull riding, bareback riding, and bronc riding.

Cost for a three-day course of training in one of the skills is \$200. If you come back later for another course, the cost is \$175. (Room and board not included.)

"Some of our students are established performers who come to sharpen their skills," Bud Sankey told FARM SHOW. Enrollment per session averages 60 to 80 students.

While it's a hazardous business, Sankey says nobody has ever been killed at one of his schools, and he couldn't think of any deaths from bullfighting in actual rodeos. Injuries? Soreness? "Well, yes," said



Bob Donaldson, lower left and with bull above, is an instructor of "clowning" at the Sankey Rodeo School in Rose Hill, Kan.

Sankey. "That's kind of part of the business."

Average age of students attending his schools is the mid-20s, but the range in ages is from "the teens to the 50's." It doesn't necessarily take livestock experience to be successful, he adds, but quickness and natural athletic ability help.

Women, too, attend but their numbers are small. Sankey notes that in a recent bullfighting session, a 24-

year-old Tulsa, Okla., policewoman completed the course.

"You receive instruction and then actually get into the ring with a bull the very first day," explains Sankey. "If all else fails, the self-preservation instinct helps you."

"Bullfighting," he explains, "evolves around the idea that although a person probably can't outrun a bull, you can outmaneuver him. The bull has to pivot on his front legs,

like a wheelbarrow turns."

The Sankey school is one of about a dozen in the U.S., and has been operating since 1973. About 150 rodeo clowns are active in the business, and some handle both clowning and bullfighting chores.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Sankey Rodeo Schools, Rt. 1, Box 201, Rose Hill, Kan. 67133 (ph 316 776-2592).

