



Got a "best idea" you'd like to share with FARM SHOW readers — a new wrinkle in cropping, livestock, machinery or whatever? Maybe it's still experimental but looks promising. Or, maybe you've already taken the idea beyond the experimental stage. We'd like to hear about it. Write to: Best Ideas, c/o FARM SHOW, 8500 210 St., Lakeville, Minn. 55044.

Harold M. Johnson, Editor



These Dairymen Custom Raise Calves

If you're a dairyman who is having poor luck raising calves, this story is for you.

Two Wisconsin dairymen with long experience raising veal calves are now in the business of custom raising young heifer calves for dairy replacements. Custom Calf Raising takes baby calves from the farms, raises them to the age of 4 months, and then returns them to their owners.

Custom Calf Raising furnishes all the feed and management for a fee of \$10 per week per calf. The fee covers all expense except insurance, which the owner can purchase for 10% of the value of the calf.

"For a cost of \$160, we return the owner a healthy calf worth probably \$400," says Mike Profit, who is a partner with Jerry Travis in the business.

Custom Calf Raising is set up for 200 calves, but the owners hope to expand the operation to accommodate as many as 2,000 calves in five years. Right now they serve about a 50-mile radius of their farm at Amery in northwestern Wisconsin.

The young calves consigned



to the farm are picked up and delivered. They are started on milk replacer and weaned at 6 weeks. By the 16th week when they are returned to their owners, they are completely adjusted to roughage or pasture. They usually weigh around 325 pounds.

More information and a copy of the calf raising contract are available from Custom Calf Raising; Box 251; Amery WI 54001 (ph 715 268-2546).

Soybeans Seeded by Helicopter

"Worked great," says a Minnesota farmer who hired a helicopter last spring to seed soybeans from the air.

Elmer Dillavou, who farms near Rose Creek in Southeastern Minnesota, planted his 1979 soybean crop by helicopter out of necessity. The results were good enough to warrant trying it again this spring as a regular practice. Last year's emergency seeding was prompted by a hail storm that wiped out the planted crop the last week in June.

Cost for seeding by helicopter was \$4.30 per acre and the seeding rate was 90 lbs. per acre, compared to 60 lbs. for conventional seeding. The seed penetrated the muddy field and got partially covered by another rain that came right after planting. Mother Nature took care of the rest.

"The field planted from the

air yielded as high as 15-20 bu. per acre in the best spots and averaged out the same as the fields re-planted late in the season with ground equipment," Dillavou says. "The fields were nice and clean with no weed problems because the old herbicide in the soil from the first planting continued to work."

This year he plans to "fly" the seed onto fields that have received no seedbed preparation. Then, he'll go in and apply herbicide and disk at the same time. "There should be no further field work needed until harvest," he believes.

Dillavou hasn't seen soybeans planted this way before, but his neighbors watched his experiment closely last year, and some of them may try it, too.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Elmer Dillavou, Rose Creek, Minn. 55970 (ph 507 437-4907).

Farm Operated Flour Mill

A Minnesota wheat farmer, who thinks there are too many steps between the wheat grower and the flour miller, has eliminated most of them by becoming a miller as well as a wheat grower.

Don Bot, of Cottonwood, is now milling his home-grown wheat into whole wheat flour on his own farm and selling it directly to bakeries in southwestern Minnesota, eastern South Dakota, and northwestern Iowa.

"There are a lot of things to do before you can get into milling," he notes. "We had to meet all the regulations of the big mills and get permits from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Our equipment had to be made to order and sometimes took 6 months to get."

The capacity of Bot's mill is 50 lbs. of flour per hour. He is now in the process of automating the mill so it will run for 20 hrs. with only 3 hrs. of attention. This year, he hopes to mill 4,000 bu. of wheat. (A bushel of wheat

makes 50 lbs. of flour.)

The uniqueness of Bot's home-milled flour is that the wheat is carefully managed from soil preparation through harvest.

Bot is not promoting his flour as "organic" though it probably meets the requirements set by some organic definitions. Any wheat that doesn't meet his strict quality standards goes into livestock feed.

Another caution to those who would like to do farm milling is that they will need storage space. Wheat must be stored 5 or 6 months before milling into flour.

Another product of Bot's farm is honey which he feels is an ideal product to market and promote with whole wheat flour.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Don Bot, Cottonwood Farm Foods, Cottonwood, Minn. 56229 (ph 507 423-6648).