

**"HE FOLLOWS ME WHEREVER I GO"**

## "Watch Turkey" Keeps An Eye On Wisconsin Farmer

Victor Jaszewski doesn't call his turkey a pet, yet it follows him around the farmyard like a faithful puppy and charges at strangers, giving out long series of loud warnings.

"It's one of the strangest things I've ever seen," says Jaszewski. "Not many people have a turkey like this. I can't explain it."

The large turkey "just showed up" last summer, says Jaszewski, a 71-year-old bachelor who's lived more than 40 years on a farm just north of Independence. "I didn't raise it or anything. I don't know if it got dropped off, or was one of those wild turkeys let go, or what. All of a sudden it was here, and no matter what I did, it stayed."

The turkey eats with the few chickens Jaszewski raises on the 250-acre farm. It gobbles up insects and munches birdseed from atop an overturned barrel. The limp it had when it first arrived has disappeared.

"He's gotten to be my friend," Jaszewski said, glancing at the large one-eyed bird. "I talk to him a lot. He's good company if nothing else. He doesn't eat much and it's just nice to know he's around."

When Jaszewski saws logs into firewood, the turkey stands guard near the woodpile, keeping an eye out for possible intruders. When he starts the tractor and pulls away with a trailer of wood, the bird trots faithfully behind the wagon. "He follows the tractor wherever it goes," says Jaszewski. "He just doesn't want to miss out on the action."

Jaszewski usually drives his truck into the city of Independence at least once a day, "to show people I'm still alive". The turkey follows the truck to the end of the driveway, then normally waits for Jaszewski's return.



Victor Jaszewski says his "watch turkey" has become a good friend.

"He'll be there by the road when I get back," says Jaszewski. "Even when I just walk down the driveway to get the mail, he's right behind me. He sure is a strange old bird."

"Some day he might be gone, and I suppose that would be OK. But for now, we're just two old birds who get along pretty good."

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The calves weighed 30 to 50 lbs. at birth, a bit under the average of 60 to 70 lbs.

### ONE-IN-A-MILLION BIRTH SHOCKED PART-TIME FARMER

## Texas Cow Gives Birth To Quadruplets

Part-time farmer David Wilde of Burlington, Texas, got quite a shock recently when he went out to the barn and discovered that one of the 10 cows in his small beef herd had given birth to quadruplet calves.

The 13-year-old Simmental-cross cow had been bred to a registered Beefmaster bull. She full delivered all 4 calves - 3 male and 1 female - without assistance and accepted full responsibility for all 4. They ranged in weight from 30 to 50 lbs. at birth, a bit under the average of 60 to 70 lbs., and at 4 mos. of age weighed approximately 200 lbs. each.

Some say quadruple births are one in a million. Dr. Jim Sanders, associate professor of animal breeding and genetics at Texas A&M University says he doubts there's that many. "It's probably more like one in several million," he says, noting that triplets occur in about 1 of 10,000 births but that quadruplets are so rare, "We just don't have any experience with them."

Wilde and his wife, Linda, were surprised at how well all four calves got up and down soon after birth. They special-fed the mom

in the weeks following the birth and also assisted with bottle-feeding of the calves for 12 weeks. After that they put the calves on a diet consisting of mother's milk, calf pellets, ground corn, cotton seed and hay. Wilde says it was quite a sight watching all four calves nurse at once. "Once they got started they had to hang on because there was only one faucet per calf."

The mother is a 1,000 lb. cow that has had 11 other calves. She's only got one eye, having lost one to cancer three years ago. But she still manages to keep a sharp lookout over her family foursome.

"Usually if a mama cow has twins she kind of pushes one aside because she only expects one, but she's been looking after all four," says Linda.

The cow was bred to a bull which the Wildes share with Daniel's father. They did nothing special to encourage the multiple birth. "We just have 10 cows and a bull and we let them follow nature's course."

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### FIREBOX MOUNTS ON BACK

## He Caters Meals With "Barbecue Bus"

Curtis Melcher came to Kansas from what he claims is the "best barbecue county in Texas" over two decades ago, but the tradition of his roots have stuck to his ribs, so to speak: He specializes in catered barbecues at community gatherings and private events throughout north central Kansas, using an old modified school bus to do the job.

Melcher converted a 1975 66-passenger school bus into a wood-fired "barbecue bus" complete with an easy-to-stoke outside firebox (mounted at the back of the bus) and full-size barbecue cooker inside the bus, as well as a kitchen including refrigerator, freezer, range, stove, counters, and dish-washing sinks at the front.

"People are amazed whenever they see it for the first time," says Melcher, who has used his "barbecue bus" since 1987 to cater meals to more than 20 groups totaling about 3,500 people, ranging from just a few to several hundred at a time. "It really works great. The barbecue cooker is big enough that I can barbecue enough meat for 400 people and with two additional cookers 1,000 people at a time. Sometimes I start barbecuing at home so that when I get to the

location the meat is completely cooked."

Melcher removed all seats from the bus as well as the rear door. He cut an opening in the side of the bus and remounted the door, adding portable steps. He used an old 300-gal. bulk milk storage tank to make the cooker and a hospital sterilizer for the wood-fired firebox. A chute transfers heat from the firebox to the cooker. Shelves above the firebox can be used for baking potatoes or for keeping cooked meat warm while more is being prepared. An exhaust fan pulls smoke out of the bus.

A divider wall separates the barbecue cooking area from the kitchen. Propane is used to heat the water and power the stove while electricity, supplied by a generator or electrical outlet, is used to operate the lights, refrigerator, freezer, and exhaust fan.

Melcher converted an old washing machine and a pair of old rinse tubs into a potato scrubber by lining the sides of the washing machine, as well as the top of the agitator, with indoor-outdoor carpet. "It lets me scrub 30 potatoes in three minutes," notes Melcher, who also made a large stainless steel "tea tank" complete with six con-



Melcher mounted an outside firebox at back of bus and a barbecue cooker inside.

venient spigots. He also brings along a large bean kettle.

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(Excerpted from report by Frank J. Buchman in Grass & Grain)