

**"I'VE BEEN AT IT FOR 16 YEARS NOW"**

## Business Booming For Missouri Frog Farmer

Leonard Slabaugh has one of the most unusual farming enterprises you'll ever see. He's one of the country's few commercial frog farmers!

"When I was about 18, I decided I was going to raise frogs," says Slabaugh, of Poplar Grove, Mo. "I wrote to everyone that I could think of for information on getting started and was told that raising frogs commercially couldn't be done."

Today, after 16 years of success-



Slabaugh gets \$3 to \$5 per frog sold to laboratories.

fully raising frogs by trial and error. Slabaugh has developed a system so successful that he has licensed and sells his process, and a special feed formula to anyone interested in getting into the frog farming business.

Why would anyone want to raise frogs?

"There is an ever increasing demand for bullfrogs in high school and college biology classes, for laboratory experiments and for restaurants, supermarkets and other food outlets," Slabaugh points out.

Laboratory and experiment frogs generally bring \$3 to \$5 per frog for a 4 to 5 in. specimen. At Slabaugh's farm, dressed frogs bring \$2.50 to \$4.50 per pound. "Most of our frogs grow to be 1 to 2 lbs.," Slabaugh notes.

His frogs are a special domesticated breed called Newfoundland Giants. They were developed from wild frogs in Louisiana and California, but they grow faster and larger than wild bullfrogs. Slabaugh says they adapt easily to any climate where wild bullfrogs survive.

While it may take wild frogs two years to progress from egg state to breeding age, Slabaugh says his method cuts the time to just 3 or 4 months. "I've also cut the time re-

quired to reach maximum size from four years in the wild to two years with this system," Slabaugh told FARM SHOW.

He licenses and sells the "secrets" of his production system. He notes that the pond construction is one of the crucial steps in a successful operation.

Says Slabaugh: "We have found that U-shaped canal-type ditches work best for us. The canals need to be about 15 ft. wide with about 15 ft. of bank between them. They should be about 4 to 5 ft. deep so there will be enough mud in the bottom for the frogs and tadpoles to hibernate over the winter."

A strong, solid fence is needed to keep out predators. Slabaugh recommends using galvanized steel or fiberglass roofing panels. He says several thousand frogs could be raised on just one or two acres.

A key to Slabaugh's system is the special feeding formula he has developed. Frogs are normally insect-eaters, but Slabaugh says it would be impractical, if not impossible, to grow frogs commercially with insects for food. He says his formula can be mixed on the farm from commonly available ingredients. It takes just a few hours a day for him to feed and check his frogs.

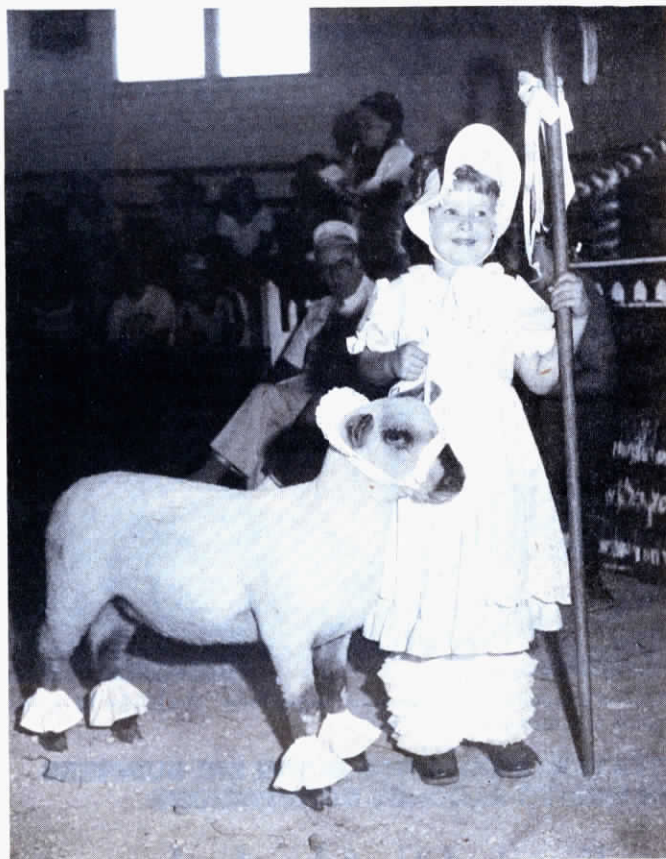
Slabaugh licenses his system for \$1,800 to interested people willing to sign an agreement not to divulge or sell the formula to anyone. "It takes about four hours to learn the nitty-gritty parts of the system. We also welcome visitors to call ahead and just look over our operation," Slabaugh notes.

One grower who tried Slabaugh's process had several problems in three years and called it quits. Scott Stifal, of Casey, Ill., says he lost his first two frog crops to severe winter weather and his last batch died from bacterial infection.

Slabaugh helps troubleshoot any problems that arise. He says the bacterial problem, redleg disease, is usually a result of poorly constructed ponds. "I know the system works because I've been at it for 16 years now," he notes.

Tadpoles sell for \$95 per thousand, and a pair of breeder bullfrogs for \$35.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Slabaugh Frog Farm, Route 3, Box 59, Poplar Bluff, MO 63901 (ph 314 785-7517).



Dawn Hanson, 5, of Union Grove, Wis., stole the show with her costume of Little Bo Peep. Her dress was of bright yellow material and her Oxford lamb sported matching ankle and head frills.

### GREAT IDEA FOR YOUR COUNTY FAIR

## "Costume-ized Sheep" Steal The Show

"Costume-ized sheep" are one of the popular new attractions at the annual County Fair in Elkhorn, Wis.

"Entries come from as far away as Northern Illinois. And each year, the contest attracts more and more entries," says Warren Potter, superintendent of the sheep department and coordinator of the "sheep costume lead-in classes" in which exhibitors dress themselves, and their sheep, in wool costumes. There is also a humor or novelty class where contestants can wear any type of costume they desire. It doesn't have to be made of wool, but they are required to lead a sheep beside them.

"The whole idea of this novelty class is to have fun in the process of participating," explains Mary Schultz, of Lake Geneva, Wis., one of the officials. "The more unusual idea they can dream up, the better chance they have of winning."

Last year, a "surprise" entry crashed the sheep show. It was a "costume-ized" Jersey calf led by Robert Rowbotham, 15, of Walworth, Wis. and his brother, David, 12. They dressed their calf in their grandfather's gray sweater. They put the front feet through the sleeves and



Carmen Sandstrom, 12, of Burlington, Wis., won the top prize at last year's show with her patriotic entry.

buttoned it over the calf's back. On the side, they printed a sign which read, "This is a Dyed In The Wool Jersey."