

Small Town Turns Out For Annual Worm Race

"The secret is in how you build the worm's racing track," says one of the participants in the 17th annual worm race in Mill Village, Nova Scotia where more than 100 participants compete in three separate races, cheered on by a high percentage of the small town's population.

The student jockeys, who range in age from 5 to 13, find ingenious ways to persuade their worms to race as quickly as possible through the 40-in. course. Participants set up paths of mud and dirt to encourage the crawlers in the right direction once the blow of the whistle starts the race. Once the whistle blows, however, all the jockeys can do is cheer them on.

"Long skinny worms usually win," says one veteran racer. "Fat worms just can't compete."

Another racer claims the secret to victory is adding just the right amount of water. "Too much water and they drown. Not enough, and the dirt isn't slippery."

Still other racers use threats of everything from fish hooks to hungry birds to urge their worms to victory.

Wayne Hirdle, who owns a winning worm named Speedy Gonzales, says he first looks for a fast-looking worm of good breeding and then does everything he can to keep it happy.



Photo courtesy Halifax Herald

Veteran "trainers" say long skinny worms make the best racers.

Dawn Himmelman, another winning jockey, says the key to success in worm racing is not touching the worm until race time to help the crawler conserve energy. But the winner of the feature race, Kevin Elis didn't use any strategy at all. A friend loaned him a worm named Rocky at the last moment and he took top honors with a time of just under four minutes.



Hair sheep, popular for their lean meat, have a coat like a cow.

"Dream Sheep" Don't Have Any Wool

"Wool isn't worth the cost of production in the U.S.," says Clyde Burch, Bethel, Mo., a promoter of "hair sheep" which don't have any wool and thus don't require any shearing, docking, or tagging. Best of all, hair sheep produce a leaner meat — without the fatty deposits developed to coat wool with an oily layer — that's more in demand by consumers.

Hair sheep have a fine coat like a cow and are widely raised in many other countries throughout the world.

"Consumers don't want fat meat anymore. Consumption of lamb and mutton has dropped to less than 2 lbs. per person per year. Hair sheep produce a lean meat without marbling that's more nutritious and contains less cholesterol. Hair sheep also have more multiple births, earlier puberty, and lamb twice a year. They don't burn up energy to produce wool and they require much less work to raise.

There's less heat stress and more resistance to internal parasites. Tanned hair sheep skins are in demand to make gloves, garments and shoes. There's more demand for hair sheep skins than for wool sheepskins," says Burch.

Some of the hair sheep breeds available in this country are Katahdin, Wiltshire Horn, Barbados Blackbelly, Texas Barbado, and St. Croix. The sheep thrive in cold northern areas but they do require more outside protection from rain, snow and sun than wool sheep.

Burch, who raises several hair sheep breeds, sells most of his meat directly to consumers. "They definitely prefer it to wool sheep. Many people who say they don't like lamb find our breed much to their liking."

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Clyde Burch, Bethel, Mo. 63434 (ph 816 284-6628).

Dinosaurs Made From Old Farm Machinery

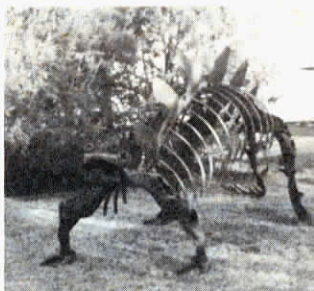
Thanks to a talent for turning old junk machinery parts into visual treats, Bill Swets has attracted a lot of attention to his farm near Ft. Collins, Colo.

The biggest attention-getter is his collection of 38 dinosaurs made from salvaged farm machinery, cars, trucks and whatever else he can find in his junk pile. The dinosaurs are full-size, ranging from 2 to 40 ft. in length, 7 to 14 ft. high and weigh from 500 to 1,200 lbs. Joints are built into the animals so they can be taken apart and moved.

"During the summer we get anywhere from 2 to 12 groups a day from art classes, museums and private individuals from as far away as Scotland. Small children, in particular, are excited by the animals. At this time they are displayed in our farmyard. However, I'm open to all offers for setting up in other locations," says Swets.

The 38 animals in his zoo range from a 2-ft. grasshopper named Hooper to a 40-ft. brontosaurus named Dino.

Swets has also gained notoriety for a huge 10-person bike he built and rides, along with nine friends, in parades.



Swets built 38 dinosaurs from old car, truck and farm machinery parts.



Ten-person bike is 25 ft. long and has a top speed of 20 mph.

"I used parts from a motorcycle, corn cutter, beet topper, other bicycles, and so on. The frame's built from 1 and 2-in. sq. tubing and 6-in. channel iron. It's 25 ft. long, weighs 530 lbs. and has a top speed of 20 mph. There are 5 sets of pedals so every

other person pedals. It has brakes front and rear and is propelled by a 60-ft. long chain salvaged from a beet harvester. When I first built it, both my brother and I had three kids so we could take the whole family out," says Swets.

He says there's at least one larger bike in the world — a 34-seater built in Australia. Other than difficulty in making sharp turns — it needs 150 ft. to turn around — Swets says his bike is not difficult to ride.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Swets, 4801 E. Harmony Rd., Ft. Collins, Colo. 80525 (ph 303 484-9509).