



Dierks' ferrets work together to kill a rat. Photos courtesy The Country Today

## Trained Ferrets Control Rat Population

"They're taking the place of cats in this part of the country. Everybody's buying them to chase rats," says Dick Dierks, Comstock, Wis., who's gained the upper hand in the struggle against his farm's rat population with "trained" ferrets.

Dierks, and many of his neighbors, say ferrets make the ideal rat predator. The weasely little animal, with its sharp, curved teeth and vice-grip jaws, instinctively runs down rats and goes right for the throat. It relishes the chase through tunnels and shed walls and under corn cribs and buildings. The trick is to teach the animals to kill and move on or to simply chase the rats out into the open where people with brooms and sticks can finish them off.

"We feed our ferrets only cat food so they really don't develop a taste for meat. If you reward them after they do a good job rat chasing they'll come to you after the hunt for a little petting as a reward," says Dierks.

In the spring and fall, when rats get particularly active, Dierks rounds up a few neighbors who also own ferrets and they have a rat killing party. The people surround the grain bin or building that is the target, and the ferrets are sent in. As rats come scurrying out, they're beaten to death. "You never realize how many rats there are until you flush them out," he says, noting that rat chasing has become a kind of sport that everyone seems to enjoy.

Ferrets are available in pet shops for \$30 to \$40. Dierks says he and his neighbors sell them — when available — for about \$15 apiece. He says they're easy to keep around and make



Ferrets make good pets if handled correctly.

good pets if they're handled a lot. If they're not handled often, there is a danger that they'll snap at any quick movement and once they bite, you have to pry their jaws apart to get them to let go. They are not especially well-suited for kids but each animal is different and Dierks says some ferrets are very affectionate and would never bite a handler.

The female ferret is the best rat-chaser because it's the best hunter and is so flexible it can turn around in a rat tunnel. Dierks keeps his ferrets penned up because he says they'll attack animals much larger than themselves out in the wild. "If you let them out they'll come back covered with porcupine quills or never come back at all."

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## Fast Thinking Saves Cattleman's Life

Last summer, while moving bulls around his ranch near Three Creek, Idaho, Bill Swan and the horse he was riding were attacked by an angry bull made lame by barbed wire wrapped around its lower leg. The bull knocked the horse out from under Bill and he was left standing unprotected.

The bull worked Swan over, bashing five ribs, tearing up his left knee and knocking his head around (he found out later a lens was torn loose from one of his eyes). At one point during the attack he ended up with the bull's head in his chest and his legs between the bull's front feet. As

he reached up to push the bull away, he accidentally hit the bull's eye. Noticing that it slowed the bull up, he reached out and covered the other eye. With both hands over the bull's eyes, the animal quieted down and Swan was able to roll away. When he took his hands off, the bull had quieted down and just walked away.

"Bill really thought he'd met his maker. Six months later he's still not completely healed," Bill's wife, Libby, told FARM SHOW. "We think covering the bull's eyes had the same effect as when you blindfold the eyes of a horse to lead it out of a burning barn."



## Grain Leg Puts Idle Harvestore Back To Work

Jerome Christianson, Canby, Minn., quit feeding beef cattle in 1977. His 20 x 70 Harvestore®, built in 1969, and adjoining confinement feeding floor, sat idle.

To put the major investment back to work, Christianson built a grain leg up the side of the Harvestore and turned it into a wet corn holding bin. An idle feeding shed was converted to dry grain storage, and a continuous-flow grain dryer and conventional steel grain bins were added.

"That Harvestore may be the highest-priced wet holding bin in the country, but it works very well!" says Christianson.

That means it holds a lot — 17,500 bu. — and can keep wet

corn in condition for 2½ weeks. He can combine corn 24 hours a day for several days until the dryer gets a Harvestore-full behind. Then, he switches to beans for several days until the dryer catches up.

To make the conversion, he removed the Harvestore's bottom unloader. A grain auger was installed beneath the original flat floor (about 4' high).

At the beginning of harvest, enough dry corn is run through the unit to leave a natural grain cone to serve as a hopper bottom. The cone remains intact, funneling wet corn down into the auger opening. The dry-corn cone does not spoil, whereas a cone of wet corn might. **Ralph Watkins**

## Swather Pickup Salvages Wet Crop

Mounting a combine pickup on the front of a self-propelled swather is a great way to flip wet grain windrows that might otherwise be lost, according to a report in the Canadian farm magazine COUNTRY GUIDE.

Gilbert Getson of Wildwood, Alberta, managed to save 150 acres of oats and barley by mounting a 10-ft. Renn combine pickup on the front of his International 4000 swather. Even though the crop had been rained on almost continuously for 3 weeks, the pickup lifted it onto the swather canvas, which then gently turned it

over and dumped it back out onto the stubble where it could dry out. In order to keep the windrows properly spaced, Getson used the left side of the canvas when traveling one direction and the right side of the canvas when traveling the opposite direction. After 3 days of warmer weather, the crop was ready to combine. Without the turning, he's certain it would have sprouted.

Mounting the pickup took just 2 hrs. He removed the swather reel and a few guards. Some adapted brackets held the pickup in place.

## Simple Combine Header Guide

"I've used this idea for years," says Roger Hagemann, Wells, Minn., about his simple guide for keeping his combine header close to the ground when cutting soybeans.

"I ran a ¼-in. steel rod from the cab down through the floorboards

and attached it to the header. On the top of the rod is a crossbar which is positioned just inside the cab's front window. As the header moves up and down, the cross bar does, too. Gauge markings painted on the inside of the window serve as a guide."

## Move Hogs With A Garden Hose

High pressure water moves hogs better and with less stress than electric prods, according to an Indiana hog man who swears by the idea.

Gene Fogle, Greensburg, has a booster pump on the water pump in his hog barn that boosts his regular water pressure up to 200 psi, when needed, for cleaning. One day he hit on the idea of using the water to help load hogs and found that short bursts

of 200 psi water provide just enough "excitement" to move hogs without the negative effects of a prod.

Gene's wife Jo, who helps out, says she also prefers using water on the hogs. "There's no squealing and they move along just about as fast. The prod scares them and makes them nervous but this just stings them," she says.