



Alexander cut windows into the heavy metal sides of his railroad car home.

**COMPLETED HOME COST JUST \$2,750**

## Railroad Car Converted Into "Mobile" Home

Old railroad cars can be converted into solid living quarters that'll stand up to severe weather better than conventional mobile homes.

Robert Alexander, Glenwood, Tex., and his brother Ray, bought an old Santa Fe railroad drover car, once used to haul cattle, for \$750. They invested \$2,000, and a lot of hard work, to convert the 68-ft. by 10-ft.

car into an all-electric home with a bedroom, bath, living room and kitchen.

Robert says the 47,000 lb. weight of the all-metal car allows it to stand-up to the strongest winds. He says the mass of the car helps keep it cool during the summer and warm during winter.



Railroad home contains a kitchen, bath, living room and bedroom.

**THEY RAISE 600,000 AT ONE TIME**

## Cricket Farmers Chirp With Success

Leroy and Elaine Henderson are LaBelle, Fla. farmers who have a most unusual "livestock" operation. They raise Australian Gray Crickets, and a lot of them.

During their peak season, April 1 to Labor Day when fishing is in full swing, the Hendersons may have as many as 3 million crickets at once, ranging from newborns to ready-for-the-bait-box crickets. In the off season, they have about 600,000 at one time, says Leroy, who estimates that they sell between 10 and 12 million crickets a year.

Most of their crickets are used as fish bait and sold through bait shops. Some of them, however, are sold to zoos and pet shops as food for snakes, frogs and other cricket-eating species.

The Hendersons raise their own breeding stock. The stock lays the eggs in peat moss. The eggs hatch about 11 days later but the stress of laying the eggs causes the breeding stock to die within days. Fifteen thousand crickets will lay about 75,000 eggs, Leroy points out.

Crickets are raised in screen-



"Camels are smarter than horses but harder to train," says Rowdy Malchow.

**"THEY'RE SMARTER THAN HORSES"**

## Farmers Train Camels

"From Memorial Day to Labor Day, we're busy traveling to zoos giving camel rides," says Rowdy Malchow, who, along with brothers Tony and Chip, train camels on their grandfather's farm near Beatrice, Neb.

Rowdy got into the camel-taming business while working for an uncle who was curator at a wilderness park. Rowdy's ability to train wild camels caught the attention of Tom Smith, Galveston, Ind., who owns a number of camels. Now, Smith supplies Rowdy and his brothers with camels to train. He's their agent for lining up camel ride bookings at zoos and special events where the brothers give kids and adults rides on the camels to raise money for charities and other causes.

"The camels we work with are the one-humped Arabian breed. They're used to hot weather and walking in sand. Camels are smarter than horses but are tougher to train because they're always trying to out-think you," Rowdy notes. "Breaking them involves teaching them to lead, then to kneel so people can get on, breaking to saddle — and to tolerate riders. That's the fun part. Like a horse, they'll try throwing you off the first few times. With their long, stiff legs, they can't really jump but rather kind of hop around.

"We've found camels to be easier to train when they're young and when they're domesticated. But we've also trained older and wild camels. We also work mostly with females as they're easier to train.

"Part of the training includes citifying them, which means getting



Once trained, camels make affectionate companions.

them used to a variety of noises. We do this by turning up the barn radio loud to music," Rowdy points out.

Saddles for the camels are special-made. They sit right on top of the hump, strapping on much like a horse saddle with front and back cinches. The saddles feature a handlebar for the rider to hold onto.

The camels' diet consists of prairie and alfalfa hay, along with a high protein grain mix of corn, oats and molasses. Rowdy notes that the animals, natives of the Arabian deserts, withstand the Nebraska winters well and seem to enjoy frolicking in the snow. However, in cold weather they do stay in the barn.

Rowdy adds that one misconception about camels is that they spit a lot. "They only spit when they're really mad and then what they're spitting is their cud."

topped wooden bins, with 15,000 crickets to a bin. After about 6 weeks the crickets are mature and are then sold in lots of 1,000. They retail for \$2.50 to \$3.00 per hundred. Henderson has distributors that sell the insects.

Day-by-day care includes providing the insects with fresh water. A bin-full of crickets drink about a half a gallon a day and eat about 5 lbs. of feed a day, says Leroy, noting that the feed is similar to chicken feed. Also, they must keep building temperature

at 85° to 90° and keep the environment and boxes clean as crickets are very susceptible to bacteria and viruses.

The Hendersons, who've been in the business about six years, says there are just a few other cricket growers in Florida. He notes that the cost of heating might make the venture too expensive for the Midwest.

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