

Wisconsin Farmer Is Crazy About Caps

Gene Dittman could wear a different cap every day for more than six years without wearing the same one twice.

But in reality, the executive director and founding member of the National Cap and Patch Association (NCPA) says few of his more than 2,300 caps ever get worn. Most remain nearly as clean as the day he got them.

Dittman is far from the largest collector. One association member reports having 33,000 caps in his collection, while a second claims 10,000. Several have 5,000 to 6,000 caps in their collections.

"I expect if we added up all the caps among our 30 members, we would have well more than 100,000 caps," says Dittman.

The former dairy farmer would like to see that number increase. As executive director of the association, he's always looking for new members who share the cap collecting passion. Dittman will send a club newsletter, member directory, and a membership cap to anyone willing to send in the \$17 membership fee. A free copy of the newsletter is available on request.

Dittman's cap collecting began one day when he looked at a pile of caps on his dresser and decided to do something with them. He has continued for 18 years and doesn't plan to stop.

"Being a farmer, it seems you wear a cap from the time you're born till the day you die," says Dittman.

Today, caps line the ceiling of his wife's craft shop in the basement of their home. They're arranged by type, with centennial caps, beer caps, company caps, bank caps and farm show caps all congregated in their own groups. He has more than 150 John Deere caps, which he reports are particularly popular and in the most demand.

Duplicates go in a box for trading at shows and among fellow members. Favorites get worn on a daily basis.



Photo courtesy The Country Today

Elmer Dittman poses with some of his favorite caps.

"I kind of fell in love with our association's 10th anniversary cap," says Dittman. "I'm wearing that one out."

Most caps come to Dittman as single gifts from friends and relatives who know about his passion. Recently, his wife brought home a real treat. Their bank teller handed over 100 caps her husband had collected.

"It was quite a thing when I walked in the door that night, and she said she had a surprise for me," recalls Dittman. "You don't get 100 caps everyday."

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Gene Dittman, National Cap and Patch Association, 1521 240th St., Emerald, Wisconsin 54012 (ph 715 265-7407).

Chip "Checker" Brings Fairness To Cow Chip Competitions

Cow chip chucking contests are a great way to draw a crowd. Although contests have been held all over North America, a group of Illinois chip chuckers has taken the "sport" to a new level.

The Chatham Jaycees run the Illinois Championship Cow Chip Toss every year during the Sweet Corn Festival. The group has brought fairness to the sport by inventing a new "Cow Chip Checker" that ensure all chips are of a certain minimal size. They've also written a book about the "history" of tossing cow chips.

The Cow Chip Checker consists of a toilet seat. All chips used in the contest must be bigger than the opening in the seat.

The group's tongue-in-cheek history book traces the sport of cow chip tossing back to prehistoric times when cave men supposedly used them as a weapon for self defense. The book also explains how the cow chip tossing was one of the first games in the early Greek Olympics and claims that Napoleon used cow chips in many of his battles.

The winner of this year's chip-tossing contest at the Chatham Sweet Corn Festival won with a toss of 141 ft. The man had been tossing cow chips since he was 12 years old but noted that he used to be able to make tosses of 200 ft. or more when he could use smaller chips.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Chatham Jaycees, P.O. Box 313, Chatham, Ill. 62629.

The winner of this year's chip-tossing contest at the Chatham Sweet Corn Festival won with a toss of 141 ft.



"Cow chip checker" is simply a toilet seat. All chips used in the Chatham Jaycees' cow chip chucking contests must be bigger than the opening in the seat.



Mechanical Steer Never Tires Of Being Roped

Unlike the real thing, this mechanical steer will do as it is told, and that's what its inventors like about it.

A Manitoba cowboy and his wife yearned for a better way to practice calf roping, and after investigating alternatives, decided to come up with something new.

"There's room on the market for something less expensive and more versatile," says Brad Smith of Belmont, Manitoba.

He and wife Kim Dalman operate a tack shop and run calf roping clinics. They've always used live steers for the clinics. However, they spent a lot of time rounding them up each time, not to mention the effort and cost required to have the steers available.

"We thought a mechanical steer would be a much better solution, and they're much safer to practice on, too," says Brad. "There's less chance of losing fingers in roping accidents because the remote control operator can release pressure immediately, should a problem arise. With live steers, anything can happen."

Smith's father-in-law, Lew Dalman, is a semi-retired agricultural engineer who enjoys designing and building new inventions. Dalman used his skills to craft a 600-lb. remote control fiberglass steer mounted on Cat-type crawler tracks.

The body of the hollow fiberglass steer was



A remote control unit is used to make the steer "run" across a roping arena. While one person operates the remote control, another on horseback can hone his roping skills.

readily available on the market, complete with horns and legs to lasso.

The steer is fitted with two Honda 6 1/2 hp engines that each power a track independently. The steer will "run" across a roping arena at speeds as high as 20 mph and turn around in its tracks.

While one person operates the remote control, another on horseback can hone his roping skills or even work on his steer wrestling technique. Smith says the steer has an over-center spring that will twist and allow the unit to be pulled over on its side.

The unit is equally as useful for practicing cow cutting.



Remote control fiberglass steer mounts on Cat-type tracks and is fitted with two Honda 6 1/2 hp engines that each power a track.

Lew Dalman says he has even used the fake steer to mow his grass by remote control while sitting on his front porch. He just hooks a push mower up to it.

To promote the product, Dalman and Smith will be appearing with it at rodeos and other events across Canada and the U.S. It

sells for \$10,000 Canadian.

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