

# Rare White Elk Thriving On Alberta Ranch

In winter, it's hard to see J.L. Seely's rare white elk. The only thing that gives them away against the snow is their big, brown eyes. But in summer, their bleached bodies stand out distinctly and they get a lot of attention.

Seely has two white elk on his Alder Flats, Alberta ranch, but hopes to double that number during the current calving season. He also has 125 brown elk.

His fascination with white elk began in 1998 when he bought a white calf at an auction sale.

That heifer calf is now one of the cows Seely expects will produce another white calf for him. She, and an ordinary brown elk cow from his herd, were artificially inseminated by an almost pure-white bull named "Kool-Aid" who is owned by Les Steem of Leduc, Alberta.

Last year, Seely bred the same two cows to Kool-Aid, and successfully achieved his goal of two white calves. At weaning, he sold one to an Ontario zookeeper, and kept the other heifer for his own herd-building. This heifer (out of the brown cow) is not snow white, but more of a very light cream color. She's now a yearling and will be bred back to produce yet another white calf next year.

Seely says he was told that the mother to his 1998 white cow gave birth to white calves regardless of what color bull she was bred by.

As for the origin of these "novelty" elk,

it's Seely's understanding that a white bull was captured from the wild about 10 years ago and he believes that the few that exist in captivity today came from that line.

Although he didn't want to provide specific dollar figures, Seely said, "There's a good demand for these white elk because they are so rare. They bring a premium."

Les Steem of Silveron Stock Farm at Leduc, Alberta, has already sold 50 straws of semen from his four-year-old white bull, Kool-Aid, for \$250 per straw. He says Kool-Aid appears to be homozygous for the white gene, having produced white calves from all five brown cows bred to him that have calved so far. There are 10 more brown cows still to calve this season.

According to Steem, advantages of elk are that they require less shelter and straw than cattle but one drawback is that they are less tolerant to heat. He believes the fact that white is a cooler color may give the white elk an edge in warmer climates.

This year, Steem exported two young white bulls to elk hunting farms in Utah and Nebraska, in addition to selling a large amount of semen to the biggest hunting ranch in Montana.

"I've pre-sold some of my heifer calves, meaning that people put deposits down on them before they are born," Steem says. "White elk are worth approximately double what brown elk are. In the last two years, white elk have really started to become a



J.L. Seely raises white elk on his Alberta ranch. "There's a good demand for them because they're so rare. They bring a premium," he says.

novelty item. There's a couple of pure white, or mainly white herds starting up in Alberta. Still, I'd say there's probably only 50 white elk in Alberta right now."

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## Parade-Goers Love "Ear Of Corn" Car

Kids and adults get a smile out of this huge, wormy "ear of corn" car built by Marvin Copenbarger, Mt. Auburn, Ill.

He started with a stripped-down Case garden tractor. He fitted it with a set of metal rings, covered by a layer of thin aluminum which he then painted yellow and green. The ear measures 12 1/2 ft. long and 4 ft. in dia. There's a 4-ft. long worm crawling across the top.

Every once in a while, along parade routes, Copenbarger pulls back on a lever which causes the front end of the tractor to rise up and do a "wheelie" while wiggling back and forth. He accomplished this action by mounting a frame on the back of the tractor, supported by a small caster wheel. The frame is fitted with 200 lbs. of tractor weights. When he pulls back on a lever, it slides the weights backward, raising up the front end of the tractor. If he puts the brakes



"Ear of corn" does "wheelies" to entertain parade crowds.

on one wheel, the ear corn car then spins around. Marvin Copenbarger, 3100 N 1727 E Road, Mt. Auburn, Ill. (ph 217 676-4533).

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## Powered Wheelbarrow Makes Wood-Hauling Easy

"I built this powered 3-wheeled cargo carrier to haul firewood to the house and to handle other loads too heavy to tote by hand," says Bill Chumley, Altoona, Ala.

"I made it from an old Wheelhorse riding mower that had a 2-speed rear end and 3 forward and 1 reverse gear.

"It's powered by a 5 hp gas engine. I made a 3-ft. square bed with 10-in. high side rails.

"There's a handle mounted on front of the engine that acts as a clutch and a T-handle that's used for steering the front caster wheel. A throttle mounts on the steering handle.

"Saves a lot of lifting. Works very well for all kinds of jobs."

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Made from an old Wheelhorse riding mower, Chumley's wheelbarrow is powered by a 5 hp gas engine.