

This Texas Farmer "Raises" Fun, And Kids

Dan Brubaker's farm is home to a herd of beef cattle and 160 acres of hay, but the barn and barnyard that once held a herd of milk cows is now dedicated to teaching children and adults where milk and other animal products come from.

For the past 12 years, busloads of children and adults alike have been coming to his Blue Barn Fun Farm near Pattison, Texas to learn about farming and to have fun. School children, company picnics, church groups, family gatherings and many other groups show up to have good, clean fun.

"Some 20,000 to 30,000 people go through our farm each year," says Brubaker. "It started with friends of my mother wanting to bring their kids out to see a real farm. She got the idea that other people might want to see it, too. The first year we had 800 visitors."

For Brubaker, entertaining and educating has become a big business. In addition to his family, there are 12 staff members. Grounds are kept neat and well manicured. Employees are put through a thorough training program so they'll be able to answer any question a visitor might ask.

Visitors see and handle everything from alligators to emus, pigs, geese, ducks, sheep, goats and rabbits. They are taught to milk an old Jersey cow, sex frogs in the fenced-in bull frog pond, and grind corn for the sheep in a hand powered grinder. They can see two breeds of deer, five breeds of exotic pheasant, two breeds of quail, five breeds of pi-

geon, peacocks, turkeys, and guinea hens, and 23 breeds of chickens. They can also see catfish eggs hatching, or catch crayfish in one of the two fenced-in ponds. Here, too, education is a part of the experience, as they learn about the difference in the male and female crayfish life cycle. And, of course, there are baby calves to pet and young rabbits to cuddle.

"We are always expanding, finding new things for people to see and do," says Brubaker. "This year we added a donkey and a miniature horse. Next summer we hope to get a buffalo."

Older model Ford tractors pull wagon loads of visitors to a park on the farm where there are basketball courts and barbecue pits, with seating for up to 1,100 people.

Brubaker relies mostly on word of mouth to attract customers. He does limited mailings with a brochure to schools that have not yet attended, naming other schools in their area that have visited in the past. The simple promotion appears to be very successful, as he draws schools from a 300 mile radius. Groups of less than 20 pay a \$6.50 entry fee while groups of more than 20 receive a reduced rate of \$5.50.

Reservations are necessary, says Brubaker. "If they don't call ahead, they may find me in the field hauling hay," he warns.

Contact FARM SHOW Follow-up, Dan Brubaker, Blue Barn Fun Farm, Box 425, Pattison, Texas 77466 (ph 281 375-6009).



For the past 12 years, busloads of children and adults have been coming to Dan Brubaker's farm to learn about farming and to have fun.



Visitors see and handle everything from alligators and emus to pigs, geese, ducks, sheep, goats and rabbits.

Wood Carver Specializes In Farm Animals

"Distinctive Wood Carvings" is a fulltime business for 77-year-old Glenn McCune of Willows, Calif. Since retiring from the U.S. Forest Service in 1984, McCune's wood carvings have kept him from really retiring at all. The versatile craftsman has hand-carved hundreds of wooden animals and embellished wooden bowls over the past 30 years.

He first started doing custom carving when local county fair organizers asked him if he could carve sheep figurines to make show trophies.

"The trophies were so unique that word of his carvings traveled fast," says McCune's wife, Mary. "He has done more sheep than anything else over the years, but he has also carved dairy and beef cattle, pigs, buffalo, horses, deer, elk, dogs, cats, some African animals, llamas, alpacas and people."

His work has been purchased by buyers from France, England, Italy, Canada, Holland, Australia, Japan and Germany.

McCune normally carves basswood or walnut. "I don't consider myself a portrait artist, but I will do a carving of a particular animal if a good photo can be supplied," he says. "All of my work is by custom order... I don't maintain an inventory. I tell customers to allow a minimum of 60 days for me to fill their orders."

For example, one woman, whose husband was an auctioneer, wanted a personal gift that would mean a lot to him, so she hired McCune to create a carving that depicted her

husband at work, auctioning three Suffolk sheep.

All types of livestock shows have used McCune's trophies. The statues are typically 7 to 8 in. long and 5 to 6 in. tall. They sell for \$90 each, or \$100 if they include a wooden trophy pedestal.

Items that are about 15 in. high sell for between \$250 and \$500.

McCune once made a life-sized Suffolk ram for the National Suffolk Sheep Association in Columbia, Missouri, and another time he made a duck with a 10-foot wingspan for a hunting club near his home in California. Though they are attention-getters, McCune says he prefers to steer clear of these large projects because they are so time consuming and often unprofitable. It was a labor of love however, when he completed a dining room set for each of his two daughters.

Although the size of his projects varies, McCune completes between 80 and 100 of them per year.

"We've met many, many interesting and nice people through Glenn's work," Mary says. "Each year, we always go to the World Dairy Expo in Madison, Wisconsin in October and the North American International Livestock Exhibition in Louisville, Kentucky in November. Those are the two opportunities Glenn takes to get out and expose people to his work."

For a brochure, send McCunes a stamped, self-addressed, business-sized envelope.



McCune hand-carves wooden animals and people on a custom basis.



Statues are typically 7 to 8 in. long and 5 to 6 in. tall.



Hand-carved statues are normally carved out of basswood or walnut.



He carves everything from sheep to dairy and beef cattle, pigs, horses, dogs, cats, etc.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Glenn and Mary McCune, 313 N. Sacramento

Street, Willows, Calif. 95988 (ph 530 934-5371; E-mail: mjmccune57@juno.com).