

Miniature Beagles Back From Near Extinction

After nearly disappearing entirely, miniature beagles are back and growing in popularity. Known as "pocket beagles," because they were small enough to be carried in one, the breed traces its popularity back to Queen Elizabeth I in the 1500's. She bred and hunted with pocket beagles that were only about 9 in. tall. The small dogs were trained to hunt in packs and to chase rabbits and other small game.

"There are no longer any in England, Ireland or Scotland, and I have only located about 50 adults of the original type in the U.S.," says Robert Mock, founder of The Olde English Pocket Beagle Registry. Mock is well known in the rare breeds world for his work on re-establishing the Miniature Jersey and Baby Doll sheep.

"I have been restoring old breeds for years," he says. "I remembered pocket beagles from years ago and started calling beagle clubs and advertising."

Mock was successful at locating some that still fit the criteria. Heights vary from 9 1/2 to 11 1/2-in. He says it will take several generations to bring the breed back in size to consistent heights of 10 in. or less. While the registry has a height standard of 12 in., smaller dogs are preferred in breeding programs as long as their conformations are correct.

At this time, there are less than 50 adult



Mini beagles sell for \$850 to \$1,000.

females of the original type in the registry, which is in its sixth year. It is a "protected" registry. While anyone can buy a pocket beagle if they can afford the rare animals, it is not so easy to become a breeder under the registry. Dogs sold as pets have to be spayed or neutered and still sell for \$850 to \$1,000. If sold for breeding purposes, they are priced even higher.

"We are concerned about bloodlines and restoring the breed," says Mock. "If a person wants to get into breeding stock, they have to answer a list of questions such as facilities, experience and goals."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Olde English Pocket Beagle Registry, Robert Mock, P.O. Box 942, Rochester, Wash. 98579 (ph 360 273-7789; website: www.pocketbeagles.com).

Tumbleweed Business Grew From Joke

Linda Katz calls herself an "accidental entrepreneur" because her home-based business selling Kansas tumbleweeds originally resulted from a joke.

Ten years ago, she was learning how to put a website together so she designed a site based on a totally fictitious Prairie Tumbleweed Farm.

"There never was an actual farm," she explains. "I was just having fun making up this website, which is essentially the same today, as it was when I first designed it. The whole thing is tongue-in-cheek."

Katz got her family to pose for pictures with tumbleweeds and the heavy equipment she claimed they used to harvest the tumbleweeds, and she listed various ideas of what this plant could be used for, never once thinking that people would take her seriously.

"After two weeks of being on the internet, I started getting orders," she says. "The first order was from a bride in New Jersey who was having a western theme for her wedding. The next order came from a kids' TV show. Very soon, I realized that there was real demand for tumbleweeds. People just love them."

Her fictitious business turned out to be very profitable since she gets the tumbleweeds for free. She just gathers them from along roadways or anywhere the wind piles them up.

"It's the perfect business since there's an unlimited supply," she says. "The postman used to accuse me of mailing air. This year, NASA bought some tumbleweeds from me for use in studying in their 'Tumbleweed Rover project.' It's aimed at more efficiently exploring Mars. On their website, they even have a link to my website! I also have a link to theirs."

She gets orders daily from individuals and businesses, and says it isn't unusual for one customer to order several hundred tumbleweeds at once. Katz says there is



Linda Katz and her family "harvest" tumbleweeds from the Kansas prairies.

also a lot of tumbleweed gift giving going on around the world.

Katz says people do many things with their tumbleweeds, from painting them, decorating them (for example, using them as an alternative Christmas tree), or leaving them in their natural state for western décor. She also sells a lot to schools and colleges for play props.

"We caution people that they cannot be used with hot lights because they're very flammable," she says.

Her only advertising is her website, and the various media stories that it has generated.

Tumbleweed prices are as follows: Large (20-in. dia., which is the largest size the post office will allow her to ship) are \$25 plus shipping charges. Katz says she also occasionally supplies "giant" tumbleweeds for the same price, but these must be shipped by truck in washing machine boxes, so shipping is extremely costly. She notes, however, that tumbleweeds can grow as big as a car under the right conditions. Medium tumbleweeds (14-20-in. dia.) sell for \$20 and small ones (12-14-in.) for \$15.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Prairie Tumbleweed Farm, 450 Wilderness Road, Garden City, Kansas 67846 (ph 620 276-3607; email: gossamer@odsgc.net; website: www.prairietumbleweedfarm.com).

Minnow Business Booming Thanks To Air Freight

Since Jamie Anderson started shipping his farm-raised minnows on FedEx, business has been booming and customers are getting fresher bait.

"We used to ship all our minnows by truck loads of 1,500 to 5,000 lbs.," says Anderson, of I.F. Anderson Farms. "An 18-wheeler heading to the East Coast might make 12 to 15 stops, dropping off 100 to 1,000 lbs. of minnows at a time."

Even with the best aeration, shipping wasn't easy on the fish. They would be pulled from a pond, then go through a day of grading before spending a day or more on the truck. Finally, they might be held by the wholesaler or dealer for up to a week before being bought for bait.

"The quality goes steadily down hill," says Anderson, a fourth generation minnow producer. His family operates the largest minnow farm in the country with 3,500 acres of ponds near Lonoke, Ark. They produce and sell more than 250 million gold fish, golden shiners, fathead, black fathead, Israeli carp, pink fathead and other baitfish every year.

Maintaining quality wasn't the only problem. Every year they would lose shelf space as bait shop owners would retire or sell out. Many big chains don't want to handle bait.

The answer to both problems was selling direct and shipping by air. Now Anderson can ship 5 lbs. of minnows anywhere in the country and have them arrive the next day.

"Folks on a small lake or pond may not be able to find a bait shop, but they can build a holding tank on the lake and keep their minnows as long as they want," says Anderson.

Anderson Farms recently developed a new saltwater baitfish called the "Black Salty." It has opened new markets for Anderson and for their bait shop customers on salt water. It is hard to find small salt-water baitfish in the winter. Even when available, salt-water baitfish have to be kept in salt water, which is a problem even in warmer seasons.

Anderson's solution to the problem was to breed a fresh water minnow that could survive in salt water for up to 8 hours.

"Wild bait just doesn't hold up. You may lose 50 to 75 percent in a day," says Anderson. "Now bait shops can hold the bait in



Jamie Anderson's family owns the largest minnow farm in the country, with 3,500 acres of ponds near Lonoke, Ark.



Minnows are shipped overnight via FedEx in 5-lb. lots.

fresh water as long as they want and salt water fishermen have a 12-month supply of fresh, hardy bait. Ninety-eight out of 100 that have tried the Black Salty say it stands up better than wild bait."

Anderson still ships by truck to large customers. Adding air shipment has made it possible to service new areas such as Arizona and Nevada where they don't truck and local suppliers have gone out of business.

Anderson also sells forage fish for bass farmers and pond owners who want to supplement available food for their bass. Again, the type of shipment, air or truck, depends on quantity needed.

Buyers don't have to worry about introducing disease into their ponds, either. Anderson has their fish tested twice a year for possible diseases and doesn't bring fish in from other farms.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jamie Anderson, I.F. Anderson Farms, 4377 Hwy 70 West, Lonoke, Ark. 72086 (ph 501 676-2716 or 800 976-4666; website: www.andersonminnows.com).

Hydroponic Styrofoam Stackers

Here's a new way to get into hydroponic gardening or green house production. Chester Bullock's Hydro-Stackers are 53 in. tall, and have 5 layers with 20 planting "sockets". "They weigh about 50 lbs. and are built strong to last forever," says Bullock.

The new stackers are strictly for hydroponics. "We developed them to use with vermiculite and perlite. Insects won't live in the mix and flying bugs are eliminated using soap, water and hot pepper powder," says Bullock.

To feed, the water-fertilizer mixture is fed into the top of each stacker. It reaches the bottom in about 15 minutes.

"In a 30 by 96 greenhouse, we can put 14,000 plants using the stackers. We can condense 5 acres of strawberries or about 50,000 plants down to 3/8 of an acre. If you fed that same 5 acres water and nutrients out in the field, it would take you 40,000 gallons per day. We use just 1,500 gallons," he says.

Bullock got into hydroponics after a 1993 flood destroyed his Missouri farm.

He makes about 15 different models including some for porches, patios and decks.

Each comes with mounting hardware, vermiculite, perlite and a complete instruction and growing manual.

In addition, Bullock sells a "secret sauce" that he uses in the water to keep plants healthy. He sells a 2 lb. container that feeds a single stacker for a year for \$14.95.

Basic units sell for \$39.95 plus \$18.95 S&H.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Hydro-Stacker, P.O. Box 2 0 6 8 5, Bradenton, Fla. 34204 (ph 941 7 3 9 - 6 5 1 1 ; website: www.hydrostacker.com).

Water works its way from top to bottom.

