

Money-Making Ideas To Boost Farm Income

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: editor@farmshow.com.

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Farm-Based Electro Therapy Business

By Dee Goerge

A love of horses and an investment in a new career helped Avis Estabrooks do what she's always wanted to do — work from home. Home is a farm, on a dead end gravel road, amid the pines and fields of Sebeka, Minn.

Customers don't seem to mind her off-the-beaten-path location. They bring their horses and themselves for electro therapy treatments.

Several years ago, Estabrooks felt burnt out from long hours as a beautician. She learned that electro therapy, which has been used on humans since the late 1970's, was also being used on horses. Since she enjoyed working with horses and many people in her area own horses, she decided to invest in the training and equipment to become a therapist.

Electro therapy does not heal. It helps the body heal itself by stimulating the supply of blood and oxygen to an injured area. The machines send low voltage micro current to damaged neural and connective tissue to restore the body's normal electrical conductivity.

The process is simple. With injuries or wounds, Estabrooks tapes small metal plates around the area. She connects them with cables to the equipment, and she sets the appropriate current. She watches the animal's reaction and the biofeedback reading to find specific areas that need treating. Rising biofeedback numbers indicate improvement. Typically, the hour-long treatments are done three days in a row. Estabrooks observes the horse for four days, then resumes treatment for another three days. She keeps the horse confined so it doesn't re-injure itself by doing too much as it begins to feel better.

The horse must first be diagnosed by a vet before she'll accept it for treatment, Estabrooks emphasizes.

The therapy helps dozens of conditions, including everything from splints and joint inflammation to arthritic joints and bowed tendons. Besides injuries, the therapy reduces pain and heals wounds faster. Early treatment prevents scar tissue that can cause problems later on. It's non-invasive and painless. The big payoff is that it speeds up healing by at least one-third. For older, arthritic horses, Estabrooks does a systemic treatment using hand-held probes down the spine and over the front and hindquarters.

As she built up her equine therapy busi-

ness, Estabrooks continued to work as a beautician at an area business. In 2005, she and her family moved to her grandparents' 80-acre farm. She built a new shop that includes space for cutting hair, a tanning bed and a room for electro therapy for humans. Many of her clients are older, Estabrooks says, with arthritis or chronic pain.

For her equine clients, Estabrooks converted an old garage into a three-stall treatment area.

Between the three services — beautician, electro therapy for humans and electro therapy for horses — Estabrooks makes a living staying home. Electro therapy is becoming more widely appreciated among horse owners — especially with performance horses. There is room for more people trained to operate the equipment. For anyone interested in starting a business, Estabrooks suggests the following.

- Research companies to make sure they offer sufficient training and follow-up assistance so you know how to run the equipment properly. Type "equine electro therapy" into any internet search engine. Estabrooks trained for three different weeklong sessions, and totaled 500 treatments before earning certification.
- There are many brands of equipment to choose from, ranging from \$2,500 to \$20,000. Some equipment offers computerized biofeedback readouts, which saves record-keeping time, but is more expensive. One feature Estabrooks thinks is important is equipment that won't overheat. When she gets a migraine, for example, she hooks herself up to the machine and often falls asleep, which is not a problem with her equipment.

- Start out as a sideline business. Get the word out about your services to local stables and area rodeos. Estabrooks occasionally barrel races and team ropes, and many of her clients know her from various events. Occasionally veterinarians support electro therapy, but Estabrooks has found the most support from equine chiropractors, who recognize that treating muscles before realigning bone structure keeps the alignment in place much longer.

- Check into local regulations to see if you need any special license.

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Mature female sturgeons weigh 100 lbs.; 5 to 10 percent of body weight is eggs.

"Caviar Farmers" Hoping For Big Payday

Idaho fish farmer Leo Ray has been working with the College of Southern Idaho and other fish farmers in the state to get into the caviar business with farm-raised sturgeon.

"We figure we get about 5 percent of the body weight as finished caviar, but we hope to get to 10 percent," says Ray.

Mature females weigh in at 100 lbs. At wholesale prices of \$28 an ounce for caviar, Ray and other members of the group say they expect to eventually harvest \$2,000 to \$4,000 in eggs per fish.

Even so, this is no get rich quick scheme. Sturgeons have to be 8 to 10 years old before they start to produce eggs and harvesting the eggs requires killing the fish. In addition, sturgeon have to be handled with great care, especially when young. Currently the consortium has about 100 females to harvest each year for the next four to five years. After that they will expand to 400 to 500 females a year.

"Sturgeon have to be four to five years old before we can even sex them," notes Ray.

By then they are a mere 25 lbs. or so, but ideal for turning into fish filets, which Ray also markets. They are available fresh at his processing plant or shipped frozen in five 1-lb. packs at \$9/lb. for filets.

Ray started raising tilapia and catfish in Idaho in 1973. He now produces 500,000 lbs., of catfish and 100,000 lbs., of tilapia each year using geothermal hot water. He also raises a million pounds of rainbow trout in cold water systems. To use up the fish waste from all the processing, he also raises and sells alligators. Now he has added white sturgeon, native to Idaho.

To farm-raise sturgeon, Ray and others worked with the college. They first had to get them to reproduce in captivity and then they had to develop a market for the meat to pay costs. Both goals have been met. "We sold about 30,000 lbs. of sturgeon last year," says Ray. "I would be hesitant to invest in something with a return 10 years later, especially when it is risky and can change politically."

Finally, after more than a 10-year investment, consortium members have begun col-



At wholesale prices of \$28 an ounce for caviar, Idaho fish farmer Leo Ray says he expects to eventually harvest \$2,000 to \$4,000 in eggs per fish.



lecting on the sale of caviar. International politics and environmental rules are adding value to these Idaho sturgeon. Caviar produced in Russia from Beluga sturgeon has long been considered the highest quality caviar. But over-fishing since the old Soviet Union collapsed has destroyed their industry. The Beluga are now considered endangered, and bans have been placed on the sale of Beluga caviar.

Ray is confident that farmed white sturgeon produced in Idaho and in California can make up the difference. He will know later this year.

"Caviar is usually harvested in the spring and consumed in the fall and winter," explains Ray.

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To farm-raise sturgeon, Ray and other Idaho fish farmers have been working with the College of Southern Idaho.

