



Cows, steers and even bulls can be trained to ride. The International Riding Steer Association teaches people how.



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Cattle-Riding "Cowboys" Catching On

You don't need a horse to be a cowboy if you've already got a cow. Join the International Riding Steer Association, and they'll teach you how to train that cow or steer or even bull to ride.

"We've given out a lot of information over the years to our members," says Jaison King, founder of the association and keeper of the website that she started eight years ago. The \$35 association membership covers the cost of a newsletter and access to an internet message board. Members also get access to equipment like nose bits for steers.

"We have 75 members in the U.S. and another 75 in Canada, Europe, Africa and Australia," she says. "Women make up about 75 percent of our membership."

Association members have done just about everything with their animals. One member in Texas does exhibition calf roping and team

penning with his bull, while another Texas member does barrel racing with her steer. Some European members do English style jumping with their animals, which most often are cows instead of steers. North American members tend to prefer steers, explains King, though a California member rides and drives a Dexter cow.

The youth group includes members from all over the world. With their parent's permission, they receive web cams and mikes from the association, so they can see and talk to each other.

King, a former feedlot cowboy, started riding steers after recovering from a work related accident. She discovered that while riding a horse was painful, riding a steer was not a problem and had other benefits.

"Once they know what you want, there is no fight from them, no spooking or rearing

and they break to halter easily," she says. "They learn quickly, and once you teach them something, you can put them in the pasture and leave them, and they will still be able to do the trick six months later."

The only problem, she admits, is that they can be lazy. "If you stop to talk, they'll just lay down," she notes.

Jaison says the cost of keeping a riding steer is about \$700 per year less than keeping a riding horse, due to lower cost boarding, no shoeing and fewer disease concerns like West Nile. She also suggests that a riding steer can live into its 20's and can run, jump and trail ride just like horses. The one exception, she says, is they get more attention from other people.

Not all cattle make good riding animals, warns King. She recommends dairy over beef, although she says Longhorns often

make the grade, too.

Another concern with riding steers is over feeding. King worked with Iowa State University and her feed dealer to come up with a good ration for riding cattle. "If a steer gets big and heavy, their knees blow out," she says. "If you have good conformation and keep the animal in shape, they will last."

This summer King will be holding the first ever training school for cattle riders. Classes will be personalized for attendees, but will include basic training skills, nutrition, hoof care, advanced riding and basic animal and equipment care.

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"There's nothing else like them," says "Choctaw" Jim Thompson, who came up with the idea of converting old sewing machines into toy tractors.



With more than 550 1 and 2-cyl. Maytag gas engines in his collection, Dale Luttig is sometimes called the Maytag Man of Kansas.

"Sewing Machine" Tractors

"There's nothing else like them on the market," says "Choctaw" Jim Thompson of Campbellsburg, Ky., who converts old sewing machines into one-of-a-kind toy tractors.

The tractors, painted to represent different tractor brands, were on display at the recent National Farm Machinery Show in Louisville, Ky. Some of the brands included Minneapolis Moline, Deere, Farmall, Case, Ford, and Oliver.

Choctaw buys the sewing machines at yard sales, auctions, and flea markets. Then he adds plastic wheels and axles. "I use almost everything that's already on the sewing machine," says Choctaw. "The only parts I remove are the needle and the head."

A soup spoon mounted on back serves as a seat. The rear wheels are usually push lawn mower wheels while the front wheels are generally off old toys. The front wheels are attached with a metal rod that goes up into the sewing machine, while the rear wheels are attached by drilling a hole through the sewing machine and inserting the axle.

Choctaw, who is an antique collector and

also restores antique tractors, came up with the idea one day 1 1/2 years ago by accident. "I had an old sewing machine sitting on a bench in my shop, where a friend was helping me restore a tractor. We had to keep moving the sewing machine around to make room for things. Finally my friend got tired of doing that and asked me what I was going to do with an old sewing machine anyway. That's when I came up with the idea of making a toy tractor out of it."

"Some of the sewing machines I use go all the way back to the 1920's. The majority are Singer models, although there are other brands such as Sears, etc."

Choctaw sells the toy tractors at a store that he owns, and also at local antique tractor shows. "They sell for \$99 to \$175, depending on how much I have to pay for the sewing machine," notes Choctaw.

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Dale Luttig is called the Maytag Man of Kansas with more than 550 1 and 2-cylinder Maytag gas engines in his collection. A retired metal fabricator who has built everything from lowboys for railroad maintenance to cattle feeders and welded pipe barns, it was only natural that he figured out how to build a tractor using his beloved Maytags.

"The differential, clutch and axles were from an old Meter Maid cart," says Luttig. I built the frame and mounted a shaft from front to rear with pulley wheels on it for the six Maytags. The power shaft is tied into the driveshaft, and the motors are all timed to run at the same speed."

Luttig tied the exhaust systems into a 6-in. chrome stack just for appearance. "When I called a truck parts store, the fellow asked how many cylinders I had, and I said 12," recalls Luttig. "He never asked how big they were."

He has also built a Maytag can crusher using V-pulleys and bearings. Both tractors and a third tractor powered by a Fairbanks



Luttig built a tractor powered by Maytags. The motors are timed to run at the same speed.

Morse stationary engine have been sold to collectors. "Single cylinder Maytags hardly ever need any repairs, just points and such," says Luttig. "The oldest I have was made in 1925. They stopped making them in 1951 when they went electric."

At 82, Luttig isn't interested in buying any more Maytags. He is selling, however, with working motors priced at \$150 each.

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