

Wolf Rescue Farm Also Sells Wolf Hybrid Pups

“Wolves make excellent companions. They’ll stay by your side 24 hours a day if they can,” says Tom Tomaselli, who cares for rescued wolves and sells wolf/dog hybrid pups to help pay expenses.

He and his wife, Lilly, have been caring for wolves on their Williston, Fla., property for 25 years since he brought home two wolf pups given to him by a friend.

“At first Lilly had her doubts,” Tomaselli says. “Then she got to know the puppies and got hooked on their intelligence. We decided to help other wolves that were injured or needed a home.”

Some of the rescued wolves had been shot in the wild. The Tomasellis used their own money to nurse them back to good health and then find them good homes. They sell one or two litters of puppies each year (\$675/pup plus transportation) to help pay some of their expenses.

“Wolves get a bad rap,” Tomaselli says. “They’re extremely shy animals. They aren’t violent.”

When strangers visit, his 13 wolves usually hide behind trees. Domestic dog

breeds rate much higher for biting. Wolves rate below iguanas, he says. There is little evidence that wolves are dangerous to people, Tomaselli adds. But he understands that they are pack animals, and when they are with other wolves they will harm livestock. That’s why he has a fence and requires buyers to have 6-ft. fences and a ground fence so the wolf can’t dig underneath. However, when properly cared for, they won’t want to leave, he says.

The Tomasellis require potential customers to provide photos of their property, prove they have knowledge of wolves, and get necessary permits to have a wolf hybrid in their state. An exotic game license is required to own pups that are 100 percent wolf.

Owners need to understand certain things about wolves, Tomaselli says.

“They don’t make good watch dogs because they won’t bark. They won’t go after a human unless directly threatened,” he says.

As pups they bond to almost anything. One owner kept a wolf puppy in a large Macaw cage and the two became lifelong friends.

Adult wolves don’t get along with dogs because of a tail communication problem.



Most of the wolf pups Tomaselli sells are hybrids that are 75 percent wolf and 25 percent Malamute (left). He sells one or two litters of puppies each year.

Dogs greet others by lifting and wagging their tail. A wolf only lifts its tail when it feels threatened. So when a wolf sees a dog’s tail up, he takes it the wrong way.

Wolves eat meat, but they’re also omnivores. The Tomasellis feed their wolves dog food, vegetables and fruit.

Most of the wolf pups Tomaselli sells are hybrids that are 75 percent wolf and 25 percent Malamute. Low percentage wolf hybrids are more likely to bite than high percentage wolf hybrids, he says, because they have more dog characteristics.

He warns buyers to be careful who they buy from. Tomaselli has a veterinarian give the pups all their shots and gives buyers a wolf training manual and papers to verify the shot record and wolf percentage certification. When wolves are shipped, they are flown by

Delta Air Pet First Service.

Taking in a wolf is a long-term commitment. They live 12 to 15 years. Mature males weigh up to 130 lbs. Females weigh about 70 lbs.

Tomaselli has cut back due to health reasons. Though it’s difficult to take care of the 13 wolves he has, they also help keep him going. One special friend, Prophet, is always at his side. Lilly and other volunteers at their business will keep the operation going. If they don’t have wolf pups available, they will refer customers to other quality breeders.

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Raising Rabbits In Mobile Hutches

A year ago rabbit producer Tara Felder decided to experiment with moveable rabbit hutches that would have the same benefits as mobile chicken coops. She’s learned a lot about the process.

“Heat is a problem with rabbits. Do not have baby bunnies in summer months,” Felder says. Instead of moving her hutches around, she ended up parking them under trees and breeding her does to have litters in September, December and April — not summer.

Water was another issue. Algae would grow quickly if her nipple waterers were in the sun at all. And the water froze in the winter.

To save time and labor, Felder lined up the pens and connected them to an auto water system consisting of a large water tank, fountain pump and stock water heater. About 70 ft. of PVC pipe delivers water to each of the pens and recirculates it back to the tank.

Because the pens are roomy — 4 ft. wide and up to 14 ft. long — Felder’s rabbits get lots of playtime.

The pens have ramps and partitions for nesting and feeding areas. Older rabbits are more passive and content to just eat and rest.

Felder built A-frame style hutches that work well. She says it’s important that the hutch nest doorway is high enough so newborn bunnies can’t get out. Raise the nesting area off the ground and use 1/2 by 1-in. wire on the floor so fecal matter can fall through. Use wire mesh no wider than 1 1/2-in. on the walls to prevent escapes. Have access doors on both ends to clean and provide food. Keep the food under cover so it doesn’t get wet. Choose and set up the water delivery system carefully. Rabbits love to chew rubber hose, so use PVC and keep it protected. Keep units light enough that they can be moved easily by hand.

Felder says she needs to improve accessibility and ease of cleaning the cages.



Moveable rabbit hutches are connected to an automatic water system. Rabbits get lots of playtime in the roomy pens.

Now she jacks them up to clean under them. She also sets up a large play area closed in by electric fence where bunnies can play.

“We have gone to feeding more hay and less pellets in an effort to cut costs,” she says.

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Archery Course Helps Pay College Tuition

A dinosaur. A skunk. An alligator. Those are just three of the 34 “game animals” that guests can “shoot” at Clint Casper’s farm. The critters are actually self-healing foam targets strategically placed around the edges of fields and in the woods.

Casper started the weekend archery business when he was still in high school as a way to make money for college.

The Caspers had the land for it. Three generations farm 700 acres, milk cows, and raise hogs and beef cattle near Carrollton, Ohio. Old logging roads through the woods serve as natural paths for the shooting course to follow.

Young Casper invested about \$10,000 in the foam targets, scorecards and other expenses. He set up his business in a cabin where he takes admission fees and hands out scorecards. He stocks the cabin with refreshments for sale, and has satellite television and tables and chairs for visitors

to hang out.

The course gives shooters three levels to choose from. The first is up to 25 yards, the second up to 35 yards and the third up to 50 yards. Casper constantly moves the yardage stakes he made out of rebar, so that shooters need to judge the exact distance.

“That’s the main reason for this, to judge yardage, which hopefully leads to more success,” Casper says. He hunts with a bow, as do about 90 percent of his customers. He sets up the course with hunters in mind, with targets in various realistic situations. The course includes shots uphill, downhill, from stands and over logs and between trees. The different animal targets keep it interesting, ranging from small (skunk) to large (elk and moose).

“A lot of guys compliment me that because it’s a hard course, it has made them better shooters,” Casper says. “I mix it up so you really have to work at judging yardage.”

Casper notes that he is safety conscious and sets up targets so that arrows can’t ricochet and hit other shooters on the course path. He mows lanes to the target and behind the target so that archers can find arrows that missed.

Each target has four circles worth various points. Casper sets up 30 targets, which take a small group of two or three shooters about 1 1/2 to 2 hours to finish.

No special permits are required in his area, but for people considering setting up a range, he recommends checking into local regulations. Casper also stresses the importance of purchasing liability insurance to cover the course.

Casper gets 50 to 60 customers a weekend. As his reputation has grown, some travel from nearby states. Others drive three hours out of their way while traveling.

“You’re never going to please everybody,” Casper advises. “So, figure out who your main customers are and cater to that.”

In his case it’s hunters who want more challenging shots. Many come back with photos of their hunting successes.

There have been other unexpected benefits too for his family. Some of Casper’s customers have purchased beef, pork and sweet corn the Caspers raise.

“The range has become a marketing tool that made the farm a little money,” he says.

The range is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, except for the first weekend of each month. The course fee is \$10/adults and \$5 for age 12 and under.

Casper plans to continue the range for at least two more years until he finishes college.

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