

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.

He's Growing Peanuts In Kansas

With 130 acres of peanuts in the ground, Clark Schmidt is hoping for a typical hot Kansas summer. The Sterling, Kan., farmer wants to prove that peanuts are a viable crop in his state.

He gave the crop a trial run on 65 acres last year and they yielded a modest 2 tons/acre.

"Last year was an exceptionally cool summer," Schmidt says. All the crops were way behind, and it adversely affected the heat-seeking peanut crop. But he appreciated the side crop of 150 big round bales of peanut residue that he fed to his cattle. Though it rained a few times before he baled it, the cattle ate it all up.

Schmidt can't do anything about the weather, but he learned lessons in 2009. This year he planted peanuts before May 1st, and hopes the weather will cooperate.

Schmidt decided to try peanuts because his sandy soil is similar to soil where peanuts are grown in West Texas. Plus he has irrigation.

"Peanuts do well in an environment where you control the water," he says.

Peanuts have potential to be more profitable than corn and soybeans. Although there is no history of the crop in Kansas, Schmidt estimates peanuts could yield 2 1/2

tons/acre. Peanuts could bring in about \$500/ton this year.

Cost inputs are a little more than soybeans. He'll use the same herbicides that were used on beans before Roundup Ready beans came along.

"This being new ground, there's zero disease and we had good plant health," Schmidt says, which is an advantage over areas that have always grown peanuts and have disease problems.

Harvesting the peanuts requires three specialized pieces of equipment to cut, combine and transport the crop. Instead of investing in equipment, Schmidt hired a custom harvester. He marketed the peanuts to a West Texas company that hauled the crop right from the field.

Schmidt admits that growing peanuts is a gamble - he can't get crop insurance because there's no history of past crops in his area. But he's willing to give peanuts another try and hopefully find a new crop for his rotation that will bring in a good profit.

If nothing else, he'll have good cattle feed and plenty of peanuts for family and friends.

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Ira and Lynn Follen grow African worms, raising 30,000 full-sized marketable crawlers per month.

African Worms Business Thrives In Northern Wisconsin

By Nancy Leasman

A young couple living in northern Wisconsin has undertaken a unique enterprise of animal husbandry: raising African worms and producing organic fertilizer. Starting with selected breeding stock, Ira and Lynn Follen have grown their "livestock" into a "herd" of 30,000 full sized marketable crawlers per month.

"Although worm farming might sound and look easy before you start, the process can be very complicated and you must have a love for labor," says Lynn. "It also takes more equipment than one would think. Combine humid environments, -30 degree temps, and worms that like to migrate around and you can have a real mess."

The Follens got into the worm farming business in 2008. "We started with 4,500 breeding worms. We then took worm cocoons and put them in a special incubator that gets heated to 80 degrees for two weeks. Then we take the worms out and re-feed. They will be re-fed every two weeks. For the re-feeding process we purchased a worm harvester. The castings (worm poop) fall through the first screen, and the worm cocoons fall through the second screen.

At the bottom of the harvester sits a new production unit with the proper amount of new bedding mix in it which the worms will fall into. Once all of the worms have fallen into the unit it then gets placed on a pallet. This pallet then gets tagged with the worms' age and when they were fed and gets placed into a worm storage room that is kept at 70 to 72 degrees. It will sit there for two weeks and then the process starts over.

"It takes 6 months for a worm to reach full size from a cocoon. We now have around



The Follens sell worm castings as organic fertilizer and also offer worm cocoons for gardening and composting.

250,000 worms. There are a lot of things that need to be controlled to ensure timely weight gain and length such as proper air, moisture and feed as well as temperature."

The Follens sell worms at the farm and also on their website, shipping them across the country. Because the worms have been grown in a warm environment, they don't require cool temperatures during shipment. "They need to be fed and kept moist and allowed to have air. As long as proper conditions are kept these worms should have a shelf life of 1-2 years."

They sell worm castings as organic fertilizer in 1-lb., 4 1/2-lb. 15-lb., and 30-lb. bags as well as bulk 1-ton sacks. They produce roughly 10 tons a month. They also offer worm cocoons for gardening and composting. They hope in the future to get into selling chicken "teas" and selling direct to fish and chicken farms.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Earthworm Organics, Ira and Lynn Follen, 6332 W. Turtle Flambeau Dam Road, Butternut, Wis. 54514 (ph 715 476-0005; info@EarthwormOrganics.net).



R.F. Ford's customized spurs are made from aircraft quality steel and embellished with everything from silver to gold plate and gems.

Custom Spurs For Cowboys, Celebrities

R.F. Ford made his first spurs using metal from a car spring and bed railing. Decades later, he is now well-known among cowboys, celebrities and collectors for his spurs made from aircraft quality steel and embellished with everything from silver to gold plate and gems.

The Water Valley, Texas, man grew up ranching and working with horses. While breaking horses as a young man, he wore his father's handmade spurs. Ford worried that he might lose one, so he decided to make his own. Over the years he made a few pairs for friends while he made his living as a farrier. After 22 years of shoeing horses and too many chiropractor visits, Ford needed a new occupation and decided to get serious about making spurs.

By 1984 he was making them full-time thanks to one of his first customers, Buster

Welch, a five-time NCHA open futurity champion. Other celebrities who purchased his spurs included Ken Curtis (Festus on Gunsmoke), actor Wilford Brimley and John R. Erickson (author of the Hank the Cowdog series).

Although he has been the winner of numerous awards over the years, Ford says he isn't sure how his work is unique.

"I know my spurs have got a real good ring to them. It has to do with the way the metal is tempered," he says. "Also I taught myself to engrave, so it's my own style."

Ford's workshop has pretty basic tools: a 225-amp welder, a cutting torch, bench sanders, anvils and hammers.

When customers come to him, he asks what they want to use the spurs for so he can guide them to the best design.

"It has to be functional first. If you calf

rope, you want a lighter spur so you can jump off the horse and run. If you are a bulldogger you want a short shank," he says. "If you are a cowboy you want comfort and function so you can ride all day."

Styles also vary for tall and short people.

Ford gives customers dozens of design choices of rowels (spiked wheels) and shanks, which connect the rowel and the band around the boot heel. The complexity of the design on the band can be anything - initials, a brand, a howling wolf-engraved in nickel, silver or gold. Ford's wife, Liz, does the leather tooling on the strap that holds the spur.

"I seldom do the same thing twice," Ford says. "Cowboy stuff is very individual."

Spurs start at \$500 and go into the thousands when gold and gems are involved. Ford's work is in such demand that he's backlogged about a year. He's sold spurs in nearly every state and Canada as well as overseas.

In addition to custom work, Ford likes

to come up with his own creations. His "George Strait" spur has a tipped champagne glass on one side of the spur band and a howling coyote on the other in honor of one of the singer's songs. It's been a popular seller.

He's also working on a more challenging design, a limited edition of 20 Chihuahua (Mexican-style) spurs with a peacock design that includes emeralds and rubies. Ford teaches others how to make spurs through a video he made, and he encourages those who are interested in spur making.

Ford sells complete kits with spurs, buckles, leathers, bits, stirrups and a hoof pick on a stand. Check out his website for more information.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, R.F. Ford, 14398 Old Sterling City Hwy., Water Valley, Texas 76958 (ph 325 484-2433; www.fordspurs.com).