



Ducks do a better job than commercial fly traps and eat any spilled feed that generally attracts flies. Once fattened up on flies, they can be butchered and sold.

"BEST FLY TRAPS YOU CAN BUY"

Researchers Say Ducks Make Great Fly Catchers

You can control flies in livestock barns with ducks, say researchers at the University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario, who for the past year have been teaming up ducks with cattle.

Preliminary findings say ducks do a better job than commercial fly traps and greatly reduce the need for insecticides. In experiments, ducks consumed flies at a rate about 30 times faster than any other commercial fly control device.

"Ducks instinctively feed on adult house flies," says Barry Glofcheskie, a graduate student who performed the experiments. "Ducks have several advantages over commercial fly-control devices and insecticides which can cost \$400 or more per season. Flies can develop resistance to some insecticides. Ducks are mobile so they can move to where the flies are. They're also a safe and continuous fly-control method. They eat any spilled feed that generally attracts flies. However, they don't appear interested in feed lying in bunks or mangers. Ducks are also inexpensive to buy, and once fattened on flies and other feed, they can be butchered and sold. A producer could make a profit of \$65 on 10 ducks by selling them or eating them at the end of the season.

"Ducks do have some disadvantages, however. Duck manure may or may not be a problem, depending on the farm and location of the cows and calves. And ducks can't be used around poultry barns because they can carry bird diseases that could be transmitted to chickens or turkeys."

Researchers tested ducks in two pens inside an Ontario dairy farmer's barn. Each pen contained one Jersey calf and one duck. The pens had conventional straw bedding and were cleaned out every second week. Each duck was provided with water to which the calf did not have access, but ducks had to scavenge for their food. Hardware cloth was secured to the sides of the pen to re-

strain the ducks. The calves quickly adjusted to the ducks, and within 48 hours, the ducks were picking flies from the backs of the calves as they rested or slept. On average, a duck made 32 attempts every 15 min. to catch a fly and consumed about 23 in that time.

Later trials indicated that providing feed for ducks didn't dampen their fly-catching instincts.

As a result of the preliminary observations of this on-farm experiment, the researchers also tested the ducks in laboratory experiments in which they compared the ducks with four commercially available fly control devices: a fly sheet, fly paper, liquid attractant, and a bait card. Each device, as well as a duck, was placed in a separate fly-proof screened cage and 100 flies were then released in each cage. Ducks consumed 90% of the flies within 30 minutes - a rate about 30 times faster than that of other devices. In comparison, catching 90% of the flies took 8 hours with a fly sheet, 15 hours with fly paper, 16 hours using liquid attractant, and 86 hours with a bait card.

"All the ducks in our study were female, but we suspect that males would behave similarly or even better because they have a higher requirement for dietary protein than female ducks, which might translate into higher fly consumption," says Glofcheskie. "Our experiments found that a duck's age wasn't a factor; both young and old ducks enjoyed feasting on flies. The ducks we tested were Muscovy. We haven't evaluated other duck breeds yet but we hope to conduct further testing on more dairy farms, as well as hog and beef farms."

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OPEN-POLLINATED VARIETIES PRODUCE HIGH-YIELD SILAGE

"Free" Seed Corn

By C.F. Marley

Joe Borries sold just over 1,000 bu. of seed corn last year and didn't give away a single cap. "One man asked me why we didn't," he remembers. "I told him we gave away something better - all the seed corn he would need from now on."

Surrounded by a sea of hybrids, Borries is one of a handful of die-hards who still grow and sell old-time open-pollinated corn. On isolated patches of soil on his farm near Teutopolis, Ill., he faithfully maintains four varieties: Reid's Yellow Dent, Henry Moore, Krug and Boone County White. Good solid names you can sink your teeth into; not some sterile high-tech number.

"That's all we raised before I went into the army in World War 2," he explains. "When I got home there was none left. I wanted open-pollinated because I didn't think hybrids were as good for silage, and they aren't. It isn't that we didn't give hybrids a good test. We did. From the mid '40's until the late '60's we raised mostly hybrids."

He sold 2 bu. in 1969, the year he decided to go commercial. In 1970, corn blight threw the entire Midwest into panic and carved out a foothold for Borries's blight-free corn. "Confidence in hybrid corn was thoroughly shaken," he remembers. "A lot of new faces showed up at the farm. We couldn't supply the demand."

Today Borries and sons Gerald and Leonard sell corn to the likes of University of Wisconsin and Cargill. "We have customers who are part-time farmers and retired farmers, customers who want it for wildlife and customers who just want a pound or two for roasting ears," says Borries, who has sold corn in every state except Nevada.

"This year in our ads we point out that open-pollinated corn will produce more silage because the stalks grow larger. Quite a few dairymen are buying it for that," he adds. "We could have sold a lot more if we hadn't talked some people out of it. We try to make certain our buyers are going to use the corn themselves as livestock feed. If they want to produce a lot of bushels for the market, we know open-pollinated won't yield up with the hybrids. We don't want them disappointed." Borries says his best yield ever was 95 bu.

"The other thing that slows down sales



Joe Borries is one of a handful of die-hards who still grow and sell old-time open-pollinated corn.

for us is that we try to impress on farmers that they can select their own seed from this year's crop to plant next year," Borries says.

He adds that considerable dedication is required to keep each variety pure. "We are helped out in that we have some isolated patches where we can raise a variety without cross pollination.

"We have found that any kind of open-pollinated corn that was ever raised is still produced somewhere. We know of five farms selling in the U.S. and have no doubt there are lots of others we know nothing about," Borries says.

"If the blight or some other disaster should again threaten the corn crop, there is a substantial open-pollinated corn base left out in the country that can be relied on to begin again."

Borries says livestock - and even squirrels - prefer open-pollinated corn to hybrid corn. "I had one man tell me he had a feeder where he put out corn for squirrels on spikes. When he first got my corn he decided to finish up the hybrid he had, too. He found that squirrels went to the open-pollinated first, even when he made it harder to reach."

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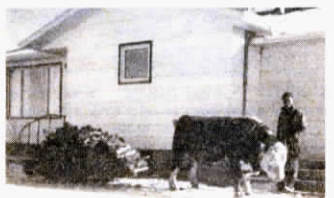
STARTED TRAINING WHEN IT WAS A CALF

This Trained Bull Does Farm Chores

Roy Jackson, Minto, Man., uses a trained Hereford bull to help clean out the barn, haul bales and haul wood in for the furnace.

Jackson started training the 6-year-old bull when it was a calf. Every day he'd put it in harness and lead it around. Now he says it quietly accepts the pulling harness, made out of an upside down horse collar, and tows the sled or wagon around the farmstead.

Jackson also trained a cow to pull a load and he's currently training in a new bull calf.



Roy Jackson uses a trained 6-year-old Hereford bull to haul wood in for the furnace in his house.