

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.



Garrick DeMeyer turned a childhood passion into a full-time business breeding non-poisonous species of snakes and lizards.

He Turned His Hobby Into Thriving Business

Garrick DeMeyer has turned a childhood passion into a full-time business. He's a captive breeder of harmless species of snakes and lizards. That means he doesn't buy and resell any animals imported or domestically bred, only those he has bred and hatched out himself.

"I'll hatch out 1,500 to 2,000 ball pythons and 1,000 geckos this year and sell most of them before next season's eggs hatch," says DeMeyer.

Most sales are direct to customers who visit DeMeyer's website, where they're often able to pick out the snake, lizard or group of reptiles they want.

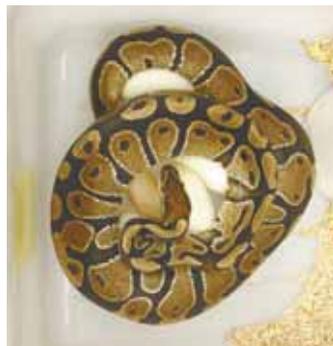
Buying direct from a captive breeder has distinct advantages over other sources, suggests DeMeyer. He notes that some pet shops are very knowledgeable and provide good quality, but may not stay in business. Others don't know more than the manual tells them, and you don't know where they get their animals.

"Most come from wholesalers who have thousands of animals coming through each year with a high chance of disease and mites," he says. "Captive breeders like me know when the animal was hatched, how often it was fed and what. We can tell what sex it is, and we know it's clean and disease-free. We can also provide care information long after the sale."

DeMeyer stresses the importance of information, and his website is loaded with it. He says the most important thing in buying a reptile is educating yourself about the food and environment it needs before you buy.

"The geckos I offer for sale can live for 30 years or more," he says. "It's very important they get the right environment and care. I've worked hard to take proper care of them. I don't want to send them out to someone who is unprepared."

DeMeyer only sells the reptiles, not the cages, food or other inputs needed. He says he has enough problems getting all the rodents he needs for his breeding population. "We have four rodent breeders making weekly deliveries of live rats and mice, plus we buy a large quantity of frozen rodents for the snakes," says DeMeyer.



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Although DeMeyer doesn't normally do retail sales at his location, he does offer open houses once or twice a year. At those, people can buy animals, and occasionally he has equipment for sale as well.

Like any good livestock breeder, DeMeyer is aggressively breeding for quality and value, and that includes color. In fact, he has reported crossing select snakes to produce never before seen colors in the species.

Prices on his website vary according to the number of animals, if offered as a group, as well as the rarity of the species and its coloration. He has sold snakes for as little as \$32 on up with one selling for more than \$15,000. Geckos vary from \$85 to \$225 generally. However, one that was listed as a "very rare" white gecko was priced at \$400.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Royal Constrictor Designs, 3917 E. Wausau Ave., Wausau, Wis. 54403 (ph 715 845-5545; garrick@crestedgecko.com; www.royalconstrictordesigns.com; www.crestedgecko.com).



Ron and Janet Helm recently started a retirement home for horses on their Van Horn, Texas ranch.

Horses Retire To Good Life On Texas Range

Ron and Janet Helm started a retirement home for horses a couple of years ago on their Van Horn, Texas, ranch. So far, they have had 13 horses brought to them between the ages of 2 and 24. As word has gotten out, horse owners from around the country have started to contact them about their unique service.

"We aren't an adoption or rescue facility," Helm emphasizes. Clients pay \$200/month (or \$5,000 if the horse is 20 or older) and the Helms only take geldings and open mares with papers that the horses have had all the necessary shots and are disease free.

So far, most of the tenants are former performance horses – hunters, jumpers and eventers – that are past their peak.

"They (horse owners) don't want to put the horse down and they don't want to hold it in a small run for the rest of its life," Helm says. "They feel this is a better life for their horses. We're strictly native rangeland; we have 12,000 acres."

Their service also saves money for people who might be paying \$450/month or more for stable fees.

When a horse comes to the ranch, it's kept separate for a transition time to acclimate to the new life, which includes grazing for meals rather than being fed twice a day. Helm recalls one 7-year-old mare that had been born and raised in a small paddock with only a 100-ft. run. She had no idea how to run when she arrived, but a year later she outran all the mares in her herd.

Currently, the Helms separate the horses into three groups. When a new horse is introduced to the group, it takes about 3 hrs. for the horses to work out the pecking order, Helm notes.

Helm, who has more than three decades of experience raising cattle and horses, keeps an eye on the "retirees". He and his wife

have frequent contact with them, walking through the herds with range cubes to keep them people friendly. Helm handles minor medical needs, and calls the veterinarian if there are problems he can't handle (which the client pays for).

However, he notes, being on the range eliminates many of the issues horses deal with in confined quarters such as colic, cribbing and hoof problems. The rocky terrain of the Davis Mountains foothills keeps hooves in good shape, and the semi-arid climate reduces parasitic problems. At an elevation of 3,000 to 4,000 ft., winter temperatures only drop to the 20's and seldom climb past the mid-90's in summer. Canyons, ravines and trees provide shade and wind protection. Water is available about every half mile piped from wells to water tanks.

Helm notes that clients sign a contract acknowledging that he has no responsibility for accidents.

"The hardest thing I did not foresee is convincing owners that a horse will do better here than in a confined space," Helm says. "Owners miss the horse more than the horses miss the owners."

Owners can come visit their horses after the transition period, and the Helms post photos on Facebook.

So far, none of the retirees are from Texas. They have come from states including Pennsylvania, New York, Florida and New Jersey. With plenty of land, the Helms anticipate they could accommodate up to 150 horses.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ron and Janet Helm, P.O. Box 399, Van Horn, Texas 79855 (ph 915 828-3532; www.naturalhorseretirement.com).

Where To Get Grandpa's Watch Fixed

Joe Hochstetler thinks he may be the only rural-based professional watch and clock repairman. He specializes in old pocket watches and if he can't find the parts needed, he'll find a way.

"One of the biggest hurdles in repairing old watches is the limited supply of parts," says Hochstetler. "It's sometimes necessary to make our own parts."

Hochstetler says he has always been intrigued with the quality and workmanship of old pocket watches. He includes those made as recently as the 1960's. While some people still use them daily, he notes that most are now collectors' items.

If you have a watch or clock that needs repair, Hochstetler says he will be glad to

give a quote on what it will cost. Prices on most repairs range from \$50 to \$250, depending on parts needed.

If anyone has good quality watchmaking equipment not being used, Hochstetler would like to hear about it. He's always looking for lathes and other related items.

"If you know about such equipment, especially Levin and Derbyshire brands, please let me know," says Hochstetler.

He also replaces batteries, repairs newer mechanical and quartz watches and clocks, and sells new ones.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Hochstetlers Watches & Repair, 1692 Sand Hill Rd., LaFarge, Wis. 54639.