

Canadian “Kid” Has Big Antique Farm Collection

Collecting antiques around Arnprior, Ont., has become competitive recently, and one of the “pros” is a young, rising star. At 49, Barry Dean is a kid compared to most of the 125 members of the year-old collectors group, Vintage Iron and Traditions of Eastern Ontario (VITEO), which is dedicated to preserving agricultural artifacts and rural customs. Within just 5 years, Dean has nearly filled a couple large sheds with antique Case tractors, pedal tractors, engines, and most anything ag-related as well as a few side collections such as hockey paraphernalia.

“I’m fifth generation (farming) and have always been interested in old stuff. I always liked how mechanical things worked,” Dean explains. Collecting and being part of a group is a natural evolution from being in 4-H, then Junior Farmer clubs.

The collecting fever really started in 2006 when he held a fundraiser as president of a local organization. An auction of pedal tractors raised \$30,000.

As president of M&R Feeds and Farm Supply Ltd. located in Arnprior, Ont., Dean has many opportunities to find treasures when making feed deliveries.

“I don’t go to auctions or search on the internet,” he says. “It’s all word of mouth. I go and look at it – and then I’ll see 10 or 20 other things of interest.”

He’s a collector – not a “picker” who buys and sells for profit – so people trust him and are willing to deal with him.

Dean especially likes it when he finds something other collectors have never seen, such as the 1875 potato picker he recently purchased. He also has a nearly complete collection of Lister engines.

Another favorite thing is finding ways to display and share with the general public. As a director for the Ottawa Valley Farm Show, which showcases modern equipment, Dean suggested adding antiques last year. His group brought items, and the public loved it. VITEO was asked to return again this year and have been booked for next year.

Dean and other club members also take items to local fairs and parades. Dean also goes to schools and has part of his collection on display at M&R Feeds, which is helpful when he has an item that needs to be identified.

One of his favorite things about collecting



Within just 5 years, Barry Dean has nearly filled a couple large sheds with antique Case tractors, pedal tractors, engines, and other ag-related items.

is the people he meets. “When you talk to older guys, you find out so much more that’s not in books,” Dean says.

He wants to pass some of that knowledge on to younger generations, so he works with 4-H kids and also formed a vintage garden tractor club that holds pulling competitions.

As he continues to add to his own collection and starts restoring some items, Dean offers

advice to young collectors.

“Don’t let your collection go,” he says. “Though teens or young adults may lose interest for a while, they will regret it later if they throw it away.”

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Miniature mules are less than 50 in. tall. Mini mule owners often harness them to pull carts or use them to give rides to children.

Mini Mules Catching On Fast

Breeding miniature mules is different than breeding other types of mini livestock.

“Because you have to cross a donkey with a horse, the novelty of seeing what you get each time is exciting. Miniature horses have such a wide range of colors and patterns that you never know what the mule will look like,” explains Leah Patton, registrar for The American Donkey and Mule Society.

Mules that are less than 50 in. tall are considered miniature, and were once fairly common because they were used to pull carts in coal mines. There was a severe decline in numbers for a while, but since miniature horses and donkeys have become popular again, mini mule numbers have also increased.

Patton emphasizes that people who buy mini mules must understand that miniatures may actually be more challenging than full-size mules.

“Mules are very intelligent. A mini mule knows it’s a smart mule. They have as much or more attitude than a big mule. They have to be handled right from the start and carefully trained.”

Mule trainers have a saying that to train a mule one must be smarter than the mule. Mules get bored easily and are smart enough to refuse to do something they don’t understand or that will injure them.



Mini mules were once fairly common because they were used to pull carts in coal mines.

For easier handling, all male mules should be castrated even though they’re sterile from birth. Mini mules need to be wormed and vaccinated, and provided with shelter, good hay or graze, fresh water and small grain rations. They fatten easily, however, so they usually do well on less feed than horses and donkeys.

Prices for them vary wildly through the country, Patton says, but halter-trained weanlings or yearlings typically sell for \$100 to \$400. Mini mule owners often harness them to pull carts or use them to give rides to



Photo courtesy William DeKay, Western Producer

Dylan Kennedy stretched out 2 empty grain bags to create this giant water slide. A hose with holes drilled into it runs along top of slide to provide water.

Grain Bag Waterslide

Dylan Kennedy of Luseland, Sask., got the idea for a giant waterslide one day when he almost slipped on an empty grain bag in the rain.

The 14-year-old tested the idea last August by stretching out two recycled bags to create a slide about 300 ft. long and 30 ft. wide. He placed it on the slope of a hayfield and secured it with harrow pins on the top and sides. He loaded a couple of 400-gal. tanks on a trailer and filled them with water.

Kennedy’s father, Travis, came up with the idea to drill holes in a hose to run along the top of the slide to provide a long lasting supply of water.

“Because it was so hot it was perfect,” Kennedy recalls. He and his friends used it, and Kennedy’s parents and sister took breaks from work to cool off on the slide.

In order to not kill the hay in that part of the field, Kennedy took up the plastic each time. It’s now rolled up and ready for next year.

“Next summer I hope to set it up more,” he says.

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small children. Many just keep them as pets.

“If you want a mini mule, see what’s out there first,” Patton suggests. “If you haven’t got experience breeding or raising foals, it’s much better to go ahead and purchase a mature animal than try to breed. There are plenty of equines out there needing homes.”

Don’t buy animals sight unseen, she emphasizes. Visit the farm, catch the mule, and see how it’s handled. Always get a written contract and records of shots, hoof trims, etc.

Keep the mule quarantined for a while when you get it home.

“Then take your time getting to know your mule,” Patton says.

For more information, check out the American Donkey and Mule Society website.

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