



The Woodrums started a carcass composting service on their farm in which they cover the carcass in wood chips. The finished compost is spread on their fields.

## Carcass Compost Service Pays Off

Brent Woodrum and his son Bart started a carcass composting service on their farm. They feel they're doing a service for their community by cleaning up dead critters.

"My family has been farming here in Kentucky for three generations," says Brent Woodrum. "When I started farming in 2003, I knew where the boneyard was, but decided not to drag anything more back there."

Woodrum tried covering carcasses in manure. By the time he spread the manure in the spring, the carcass had disappeared. He studied the idea, with help from Dr. Steve Higgins at the University of Kentucky, and realized wood chips were the way to go.

They start by covering the carcass in wood chips and leaving it undisturbed for at least 80 days. At least 8 cu. yds. of wood chips are used for every 1,000 lbs. of carcass. The animal is placed on a 2-ft. deep chip bed and covered to a depth of 4 ft. with chips.

"I realized we had the land to do this, and it could be a good sideline if we set up a commercial site," says Woodrum.

He got about \$35,000 in grants to get started. It took \$30,000 in gravel for the pad and \$15,000 for a trailer. The pad is 26,000 sq. ft. and consists of 14 in. of rock over filter fabric on a clay soil base. Water can penetrate, but the rock and compost material is retained. Wood chips piled on top of the pad provide cover for the dead animal and absorb nutrients released in the composting process. The finished compost

is spread on Woodrum's fields.

He expects the current site to hold between 600 and 700 large animal carcasses and is already planning to expand the site. Woodrum also is negotiating with a slaughterhouse about taking their offal. About the only things he won't take are dogs and cats that have been euthanized, as the chemicals used may not break down quickly enough.

The Woodrums charge a sliding fee based on the size of the animal, starting at \$72.50 and dropping to \$42.50 for anything less than 600 lbs. The local conservation district reimburses half the cost to encourage use of the service. Fees are reduced for multiple animals from a catastrophe, such as when a customer lost three steers to blackleg. Fees are also reduced if the animal is delivered. Otherwise, the Woodrums respond to pickup calls with their "mobile rendering facility" trailer.

"We picked up 20 animals the first month, but fewer the next month," says Woodrum. "The following month was pretty busy. We found the best way to get a call was to unhook the trailer."

Woodrum thinks setting up such a site is a good idea. He worked closely with state and county officials in getting needed permits. "Our county has really treated us well, and we have commitments from four counties in total," says Woodrum.

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Former cowboy champion Jim Hyde now operates a silversmithing school on his farm, where he teaches students right in his workshop.

## Former Cowboy Champion Now Works As Silversmith

By Sylvia MacBean

At one time Jim Hyde, of Alida, Sask., was well-known as a cowboy and horse trainer. After retiring, he became an excellent silversmith, sometimes even making the belt buckles many cowboy champions wear.

"I had a friend who was a silversmith in California and I saw a lot of his work. I decided I wanted to learn to make belt buckles," Hyde says.

Silver is used on horse bridles, harnesses, saddles, spurs, belt buckles, scarf and tie clips, broaches, and other decorative items.

"I had another friend who started up as a silversmith and he was doing quite well. He asked, 'Why don't you try it?' So, I made a pair of spurs. They worked out and I had a whole bunch of people who wanted to buy them," he says.

"I learned the basics at Lethbridge Community College and quit training horses. I went to several silversmithing schools to learn to engrave and make a variety of products," Hyde says.

He and his wife Elaine now operate a silversmithing school on their farm and he teaches students right in his workshop. Students pay \$900 for a 3-day session.

"We offer four different programs. The first is basic silversmithing and the second is basic engraving. The others involve bit making,

spur making and jewelry.

"Students go home with enough knowledge to start a small part time business. We calculate that most people working at home after work could make \$2,500 income in the first year and go up from there," Hyde says.

Students can return later for one day sessions at \$200 per day to get help," he explains. "I've got some students who have been coming back for 20 years."

Hyde says silversmithing is the perfect occupation for people with mobility problems.

"You need to have upper body strength and many people in wheelchairs have lots of upper body strength. You have to be able to saw, solder, and you need to have some artistic talent so you can do layout and design. And you also need to practice," he says.

Hyde travels to visit other silversmiths. He is planning a trip to Sheridan, Wyoming to the Silver Extravaganza. His daughter, Kelly and grandson Tayte McRae are also silversmiths in Pincher Creek, Alta.

"There are many stay-at-home mothers working as silversmiths," Hyde notes.

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## Customers Helped Finance New Butcher Shop

When livestock producer Tom Delehanty decided to open a butcher shop, his customers helped finance the shop by pre-buying meat.

Delehanty and his wife, Tracey Hamilton, run Pollo Real Pastured Poultry, selling nearly 20,000 farm-processed chickens and turkeys yearly. Product is sold through Pollo Real CSA, farmer's market customers and restaurants in and around Santa Fe, New Mexico. The \$250,000 they raised from customers allowed the Delehantys to do things bank financing wouldn't.

"We were able to buy older equipment for 20¢ to 30¢ on the dollar, where a bank would require new in case we failed and they had to resell it," says Delehanty. "Instead of a loan officer shaking me down for answers, people brought in family and friends to pre-buy and get the discount we offered."

Delehanty admits it was the discount on the chickens and turkeys he sells that sold a lot of people on the idea of pre-buying. Others did it because they wanted a butcher shop in Santa Fe that carried pasture raised meats. Either way, the deal is the same. Founding members wrote out a check for meat they planned to buy in the future. For doing so, they were guaranteed a discount on the retail price.

"We started out asking enthusiastic customers for \$3,000 to \$5,000 and gave them 10 percent discounts and priority on our fresh eggs and heritage turkeys," explains Delehanty. "Then we opened it up to anyone willing to pre-buy \$500 of meat products. The discount lasts until the initial money is gone."

The up-front money allowed the couple to lease a 3,000-sq. ft. storefront with an option for more space. They've also stocked it with equipment and are getting set up to open for

business. In addition to their pasture-raised poultry, they will also be selling heritage breed pork, beef and lamb from other producers.

"We will be curing our own meat, grinding and making sausage and cutting meat," says Delehanty. "We will have meat cases for fresh meat and will also be making soups, pâté and ground products for take-out. Santa Fe doesn't have anything like it."

The Delehantys have long used a similar program to run their Pollo Real CSA for poultry, eggs and garden crops. Members who pay \$400 up front don't get a set package of product delivered monthly for a set price, as with most CSA's. Instead, they stop by the farm and pick up what they need at the farm price. If they stop by the farm's stand at the Santa Fe farmer's market, they get their selections at 10 to 20 percent less than that day's retail price. A signed slip for the amount

taken is later deducted from the member's account.

"With the new shop, members will be able to go there as well and pick up anything they want that we carry and apply it against their account," says Delehanty. "If they have discounts coming, they are just subtracted from the price we have on the board that day."

People seem to like the system. Most simply keep a running account. It also simplifies things for the Delehantys.

"When their account gets low, most simply add another \$50 or \$100," he says.

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