

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.**



Donna Hancock hired an experienced processor to help her set up this fiber processing mill. She uses it to process small orders into specialty yarns.

Spinning Mill Processes Large And Small Fiber Orders

Serious knitters love experimenting with specialty yarns, and Donna Hancock knows that. Her business's ability to process raw fibers sets her apart from other cottage fiber processing businesses that only produce regular ply yarns. She's also unusual in that her business, Wellington Fibres, welcomes customers with orders as small as one fleece.

Her own need to process small orders into specialty yarns led Hancock to hire an experienced processor to help her set up the fiber processing mill in 2006. She raises Angora goats and hand-spins her own yarn.

"I learned details and characteristics of fibers. That has been a real asset. It helps know how to make better blends for specific uses," she says.

Each order gets personal attention. She asks about the fiber and how the customer wants to use it. If a fleece comes in that is too dirty, she lets customers know it will be very expensive to process and that they likely won't be happy with the results.

With three employees and a full line of processing equipment, Wellington Fibres cleans and processes fibers into roving for hand spinners, batts for felting or quilting, and regular ply and specialty yarns and yarn blends. Hancock's website lists fees for washing, processing and dyeing based on weight.

Most of the fibers are from sheep, goats and alpacas, but Wellington Fibres also blends dog hair with wool and has even processed yak hair from Mongolia.

She says it's not a business that makes a lot of money and that it's important to have a background in spinning, knitting and yarn to successfully run a processing mill.

Hancock spins when she finds time between running the business and working at a university as a forage breeder. She blends the mohair from her angora goats with wool and creates kits for knitters to make a scarf, hat or other item for less than \$20.

"It's a way of introducing people to a product without a big investment," Hancock



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says.

The blend of products and services has kept her business very busy and popular with customers. Typically, her staff works on various stages of about six orders at a time, and they have 7 to 8 mos. of work waiting to be done.

Hancock accepts fibers from Canada and the U.S. Check out the business's website for services, pricing and available products.

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Video Helps Farms Connect With Customers

Here's a new idea for anyone who sells livestock or produce direct to consumers: set up on-farm cameras so they can actually watch their food grow.

The idea has caught on in Japan, where landowners mount cameras overlooking garden plots they rent to weekend gardeners. During the week renters can briefly escape city life by checking the progress of their garden plants via cell phone or computer.

We couldn't find any similar use of web cams in the U.S., but we did come across Terry and Steve Golson who set up 4 eye-level cameras aimed at their chickens and goats.

They set up the webcams (www.hencam.com) to promote a book Terry wrote called *The Farmstead Egg Cookbook*. It caught on, even drawing enough media attention to earn them an appearance on the Martha Stewart program in 2010. On its own, a live stream webcam may not add to the bottom line, but it helps connect with people.



Terry and Steve Golson set up 4 eye-level cameras aimed at their chickens and goats.

Golson says it's important to remember that the camera catches everything. She has people who know her schedule and wait to see her do chores and gather eggs from her 19 hens.

Sheep Producer Opens On-Farm Processing Plant

Anderson Ranches, a fifth generation sheep producer in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, expanded its brand in a big way in 2013 by opening its own meat processing facility. "Now we control the quality from the time lambs are conceived until the finished product is delivered to customers," says Reed Anderson. Their new plant is a 15,000 sq. ft. facility that can process up to 300 animals a day. "With this facility we can process animals at the exact time we want to and deliver the exact product our customers want," says Reed, noting that the plant can also process cattle and goats.

To set up the processing plant, Reed first checked out government grants and looked into setting up their business as a co-op, but eventually they mortgaged their farm to finance the facility. The building is a post and frame structure. Some processing equipment was acquired from a recently closed plant. Reed says the holding pens and handling facility were designed for the humane treatment of animals. "We used several of Temple Grandin's ideas like curved walkways, solid chutes and walls, plenty of lighting, low noise levels and non-slip surfaces to create a low stress environment," Reed says.

"Handling animals in a gentle manner before slaughter is very important to maintain excellent meat quality." Anderson even has security cameras monitoring the unloading area to make sure animals are handled properly as they're delivered to the plant. All of these measures are designed to maintain the family's long-standing tradition of excellence.

That Anderson tradition began in the 1920's when Reed's great-grandfather and grandfather started raising small flocks of lambs. Today, Reed, his wife Robyn, and two sons raise Suffolk, Hampshire, Coopworth and Dorset, all English breeds. The animals thrive in the Willamette Valley's cool, moist climate, feasting on nutrient-rich grass that grows lush thanks to the nearly 40 to 50 in. of rain every year. Anderson Ranches is Certified Humane, its animals are never fed grain or byproducts, and they're never enclosed in feedlots. Their sought after lamb products are found in fine restaurants



Anderson Ranches recently expanded its brand by opening its own meat processing facility.

throughout the West and also sold in retail locations. "Our customers are interested in free range meat from animals that are grass fed and treated humanely," says Reed. "We provide all three of those attributes with the 15,000 animals we process each year."

In addition to breeding, raising and processing lamb, the family also produces forage-type grass seed, makes compost from grass straw, and sells pelts from processed animals to a plant in Texas. Unusable parts of butchered animals at the new plant are composted and spread back on their fields as fertilizer.

"We're really a full-circle operation, with hands-on quality control at every level," Reed says with pride. "Not too many years ago we used to ship our lambs 500 miles to California for processing, then we worked with a processor 30 miles away, and now the processing is done right on our ranch. The facility is perfect for us and for our customers."

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