



**Big Cricket Farms in Youngstown, Ohio, raises crickets in bins for human food, selling them to protein powder processors and restaurants.**

## Cricket Farmer Says Consumers Developing Taste For Insects

Could crickets be coming to a grocery store near you? Maybe, says Kevin Bachhuber, owner of Big Cricket Farms in Youngstown, Ohio. While most of the producers who raise crickets sell them for bait and animal feed, Bachhuber raises crickets for human food.

With a flavor somewhere between cashews and corn, his food-grade crickets are sold to protein powder processors and restaurants. Bachhuber hopes to sell them whole to be eaten like the dry roasted crickets he ate during a month-long stay in Thailand in 2006. There they are served like pretzels at beachfront bars.

"I got used to it being in my diet very quickly," he says. Back in the states, the Wisconsin native realized no one in the U.S. was growing crickets for food, but there was demand for it in protein bars, with companies having to import the crickets.

In April 2014, he started his "farm" in a 5,000 sq. ft. cinder block warehouse in Youngstown, Ohio. He chose that area because of reasonable rent and availability of workers.

One disadvantage is the cost of winter heating, which means the operation scales back during the cold months.

"Crickets do best at 80 to 90 degrees and 80 percent humidity in the beginning," Bachhuber says.

Female crickets lay 100 eggs a day for 2 or 3 weeks. Eggs start out the size of specks and after going through 7 molts, inch-long crickets are ready to harvest in about 5 weeks. The crickets are raised in bins and fed fresh fruits, veggies and grain similar to organic chicken feed. When it's time for



**Crickets are fed fresh fruits, veggies and grain. They have a flavor somewhere between cashews and corn.**

harvest, the crickets are chilled to dormancy similar to what wild crickets experience when the weather turns cold. Then they are flash frozen for shipment.

"Just 2 lbs. of food and 1 gal. of water is all that it takes to raise a pound of crickets," Bachhuber says. "Crickets have 1/3 of the fat and about as much protein as ground beef. A 1/4 cup serving has 50 calories and 6 g protein."

It takes about 1,000 crickets to make 1 lb., worth \$25 to \$30/lb. retail.

Demand for organic crickets is strong and helps the profit margin for Bachhuber and his four employees as they figure out the most efficient ways to raise them.

"I think it's going to be a slow adoption from the ag side. Producing insects is a lot different from anything I've raised before," Bachhuber says.

The market is ahead of production.

"We're having a hard time keeping up with demand. We're producing a fraction of what we could be selling," Bachhuber says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Big Cricket Farms, P.O. Box 1742, Youngstown, Ohio 44501 (ph 608 345-4567; www.bigcricketfarms.com).

## Tractor Hobby Grew Into Successful Business

John Shepard and his wife operated a Wisconsin dairy farm in the early 1990's, but his real passion was restoring 2-cyl. Deere tractors. Shepard acquired so many extra parts in a few years that he opened a new business called Shepard's Tractor Parts. More than 22 years later it's still going strong. Shepard sold his dairy cattle in 1996 and never looked back.

"My wife was in direct sales with home and garden items, so between the two of us we had good experience on the sales side," Shepard says. "Early on we used to do a dozen or more shows a summer, which was a lot of work, but that really gave us good exposure in the market. Now we only do the larger shows and we're more active on internet sales."

The business sells new, used and reproduction parts, primarily for pre-1960 2 cylinder tractors. They acquire used parts from individuals, order reproduction parts as needed and have their own inventory of 120 tractors for salvage parts.

Shepard says when he first started the business he was selling about half new and half used parts. Now they sell more new parts because they're more available. "With older tractors, there's always been a limited supply of some parts," Shepard says. "There are only so many salvage tractors available, and once they're gone, that's it. Parts manufacturers realized that and began making reproduction items, and now that business has really prospered."

Shepard has a large supply of popular sellers like seats, manifolds, grill screens, fenders, clutches and mufflers. They work with 3 or 4 suppliers of antique restoration parts and always try to use products that are made in the U.S. "The quality is better, and that's what people want," Shepard says. "I get flyers every day from companies offering reproduction parts and I screen them all. Many of them don't have the quality I want. The companies I do work with are legitimate suppliers of good parts, and that's what I'm proud to sell my customers."

To promote his business Shepard runs small ads in Farm Collector, Green Magazine and 2-Cylinder magazine. He also has a website and sells parts on eBay. "We're able to fill just about every order in a day or two," Shepard says. He's always amused when people call and want a perfect original part from a 50-year-old tractor. "I ask them if they



**Shepard's Tractor Parts sells new, used and reproduction parts, primarily for pre-1960 2-cyl. tractors. Photo above shows the manifold for a Deere M.**



**New decals, emblems and safety stickers are also available.**

know where I can get a like-new clutch for a 1960 Chevy or a like-new suit made in 1960," Shepard says. "They get the drift that like-new salvage parts are hard to find, but reproduction items are just as reliable."

In 2009 Shepard expanded into New Generation Deere tractor parts in response to customer demand. Says Shepard, "Today's younger restorers are working more on tractors they grew up with, so we have to meet their needs."

Even though Shepard has focused on Deere parts, he also carries reproduction parts for other tractors, too. "We have items like magnetos, carburetors, brake line items, throttle levers, and other common parts for International Harvester, Farmall, Ford and other brands. If we don't have it we can guide a person to where they can find it."

Shepard still restores tractors in his spare time and has some for sale.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Shepard's Tractor Parts, E633-1150 Ave., Downing, Wis. 54734 (ph 715 265-4988; www.shepardstractorparts.com).

## She Makes Clothing For Chickens

Julie Baker admits her rural business seems "slightly ridiculous", but sales of diapers and clothing for chickens has continued to grow since she started her business 3 years ago. Besides meeting a need for people who show chickens or just like to pamper them, she is proud of the jobs she has created.

The New Hampshire entrepreneur explains she first sewed diapers for her daughter's show birds that also spent time in their home.

"Her birds were like her Barbie dolls," Baker says, noting that they found their way into family photos and other activities.

When other show bird owners saw her diapers they asked if she would make them for their chickens. Baker's poultry diapers have snap fasteners, a cotton exterior and a water resistant nylon liner that fits over the body and completely covers the area

under the tail feathers. A pad or paper towel is placed in the appropriate area and can be pulled out easily and changed every hour or two.

"I started with the diapers, then added saddles. Saddles are useful to protect the birds from pecking," Baker says. "Dresses came next because people sent me photos with their birds, and I thought the pictures would be cuter if the chickens were wearing dresses."

As orders grew, Baker saw an opportunity to employ women in the Dominican Republic where she works as a volunteer. She currently hires three women fulltime to sew and has started Sewing My Future, a nonprofit organization, which is close to her heart and the driving force of her Pampered Poultry business. When not sewing poultry wear, the women sew uniforms for children so they can

attend school in the Dominican Republic. The women are paid part of the \$30/uniform that comes from charitable contributions. (Check out the website for more information.)

Baker visits the Dominican Republic a few times a year and hopes to find more work for more women so they can support their families. Meanwhile, folks who love their chickens like the practical and fun items they sew.

The website includes sizes and prices for small to large, but custom orders can also be made.

"We've made items for turkeys and peacocks," Baker says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Julie Baker, Pampered Poultry, 95 Windsor Rd.,



**Julie Baker says sales of diapers and clothing for chickens have grown fast since she started her business 3 years ago.**

Claremont, N.H. 03743 (ph 603 558-4934; www.pamperyourpoultry.com; julie@pamperyourpoultry.com).