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DOG BREEDING IS A PROFITABLE SIDELINE

North Dakotan's Farm Is

"Going To The Dogs"

By Jim Bareksten

A grain and livestock operation is common in farming country. A grain and dog breeding operation isn't, especially in North Dakota.

But then McVile, N.Dak., farmer Jeff Knudson really likes dogs. As he puts it, "You have to like dogs to get involved with a kennel operation."

Running a kennel has a lot in common with a dairy farm, explains Knudson. "You're caring for the dogs day in and day out, seven days a week. You can't let dogs go like animals in the pasture. There's constant cleaning and veterinary care."

Knudson, who grows mostly durum and barley on his farm, says his dog breeding business is a sideline. He takes care of the dogs in the winter and his wife Lynette takes care of them in the summer when he's busy in the fields.

The kennel operation came into being six years ago. "We were looking for some purebred dogs just for pets at that time. I saw an ad in a farm paper - another kennel was selling some dogs. I visited it and ended up buying. That's how it started."

Knudson recalls being leery of getting into the dog breeding business at first. "Finally, I became convinced that there was a market for pups in pet stores."

He quickly found out that being convinced there's a market is one thing; getting your share is another. "We made a lot of phone calls when we first had puppies to find anyone who would give us a shot at the

market. It wasn't easy."

There were other lessons to be learned, chiefly about diseases. "There are many diseases that affect dogs and a lot of them are significant only in breeding kennels. Veterinarians haven't had much to do with these diseases, but you learn them in a hurry," says Knudson.

Knudson found the market for pups to be highly competitive. "More dogs are being raised so a breeder has to concentrate on quality. People want better dogs. If you've got decent pups, that's the main thing. If you can get your foot in the door and keep sending pet stores quality pups, then there's a good market for them."

Knudson has his foot in the door. He now sells 95% of his pups to big city pet stores, dealing mostly with a couple of large pet store chains. "There isn't much of a market out in this area. We sell a few out the door, but very few."

Knudson's kennel operation is relatively small. "We usually have 25 to 30 breeding dogs. A lot of kennels have 400 to 500 breeders - full-time guys with lots of help.

There's more to Knudson's dog kennels than his preference for dogs. "The pet market isn't tied to the farm economy," says Knudson. "It's not a market that fluctuates like grain or cattle or hogs. That sure helps."

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"The pet market isn't tied to the farm economy so it doesn't fluctuate like cattle or hogs," says Knudson (at left in photo).

FARM SHOW

Ag World

Editor's Note: Most of what goes into Ag World stems from story ideas sent to us by readers. This special section of FARM SHOW touches on the lighter side of farming and ranching — everything from human interest stories, to unusual hobbies, to unique things farm families are doing for fun or profit.

If you've read or heard a good Ag World type story you'd like to share with others, send it to: FARM SHOW, Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044.



Townpeople sold 600 shares at \$50 a share to finance the revival of their local cafe.

TOWNSPEOPLE INCORPORATED AND SECURED AN SBA LOAN

They Banded Together To Save Local Cafe

Last April, the City Cafe in Americus, Kan., a farm town of 1,200 people about 10 miles west of Emporia, closed its doors.

The cafe had been anchoring the town's main business block for as long as anyone in town could remember. "The cafe's equipment was run down and we were losing money," says Dave Buffington, manager of the old restaurant. "We had enough customers to keep it going but not enough money to pay for repairs."

But within weeks, the townspeople banded together to set up a corporation and establish a new cafe, the Breckinridge County Cafe. They sold 600 shares at \$50 a share to more than 60 stockholders and now have over \$75,000 in financing. They also secured a bank loan for \$45,000 guaranteed by the Small Business Administration.

A small town's cafe is its main hub and social center, says Betsy Landwehr, president of the cafe's corporation, Americus Enterprises, Inc. "Our local people have a lot of pride and when you lose the main cafe

you lose part of the town's identity. In a small town everyone has to help each other out or nothing will happen. A lot of people who live here work in Emporia, and it wouldn't be hard to be gobbled up by a larger town."

A contest was held to name the cafe. Mrs. Landwehr's 16-year-old daughter, Sarah, won it after discovering that Lyon County, in which Americus is located, at one time was the county seat of Breckinridge County, which was named after vice president John C. Breckinridge. But when Breckinridge, a Kentuckian, sided with the South in the Civil War, the local free-state Kansans called him a traitor. In 1862, when the county seat was shifted to the faster-growing Emporia, they changed the county name to Lyon, for Gen. Nathaniel Lyon, a Union hero.

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