



Bill Nigg has spent most of his life collecting and restoring horse-drawn stagecoaches and buggies as a hobby. "It's a sickness there is no cure for," he says.



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Collector Has Spent 50 Years Preserving Stagecoaches, Wagons

Bill Nigg says "one thing just led to another" to explain his life-long hobby of collecting and restoring horse-drawn stagecoaches and buggies. "I went to a rodeo when I was just a kid and saw a pony team hitched to a covered wagon, and that really sparked my interest," Nigg recalls.

Over the past five decades, Nigg has owned dozens of horse-drawn vehicles, including single-top buggies, wagons and two stagecoaches. "It's a sickness there is no cure for," he says about his hobby.

As he neared his 80's, Nigg reached the difficult decision to reduce his vehicle inventory and sold a dozen or more large pieces to one museum and a few individual

wagons to other museums. Nigg is a lifetime member of the National Stagecoach & Freight Wagon Assn., a "not-for-profit organization created to help detail the triumphs, struggles and day-to-day operation of these legendary vehicles."

A high point of Nigg's hobby was a cross-country journey in 2008 with 50 other wagons and coaches to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the closing of the Deadwood Freight Wagon Stagecoach Trail. Nigg and his wife, JoAnn, traveled in a restored Abbott & Downing stagecoach, "the largest one I ever owned," he says. He purchased the coach from a collector near St. Louis and says it still has all the original hardware,

including springs made from leather and canvas curtains that roll down to keep out the elements.

Starting from Fort Pierre, S. Dak., the Niggs and their friend, Doug Hanson, navigated the stagecoach 240 miles to Deadwood, S. Dak. "Doug did most of the driving," Nigg points out. The couple traveled 17 days across prairie grass, rocks and streams, much like early settlers.

Stagecoach travel is definitely not as simple as it may appear to some, Nigg says. "Hitching horses to a stagecoach is a hard and dangerous job. A person can do it alone, but we were lucky we always had extra people to help with the hitching." The couple says

they are happy they made the journey because "we made a lot of wonderful friends that we still see."

It has been a great hobby over the past 50 years, Nigg says. "We've owned a lot of antique vehicles over the years, and our collecting philosophy has always been, keep the best and sell the rest."

Although Nigg makes fewer appearances than in the past, he is looking forward to appearing in a 2016 Browns Valley, Minn. parade when the town celebrates its 150th anniversary.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bill Nigg, P.O. Box 324, Browns Valley, Minn. 56219-0324 (ph 605 694-2747).

Mini Mules: Lots Of Smarts In A Small Package

If you don't think mules are smart, Shawna Brown would like to introduce you to Sunny Delight.

"She's figured out how to get any latch open, so we have to get creative to keep her penned in," Brown explains. Though Sunny Delight is full grown at 34 in. tall, the miniature mule is smarter than most full-grown mules.

"Miniature mules are defined as any mule under 50 in. at the withers. Most mules tend to take on the body type of the horse parent, while the donkey parent shapes the head, ears, tail, and sometimes hoof," says Leah Patton office manager for the American Donkey and Mule Society (ADMS).

She notes that mini mules were used in mines more than 100 years ago. Recently mini mules have been growing in popularity despite the fact that as a hybrid between a horse and a donkey, mules can't reproduce. And getting horses and donkeys to breed is not a skill every breeder has.

Brown, who owns Sagebrush Minis with her husband, David, and father, Norman, near Bastrop, Texas, views that as a good thing to help maintain quality breeding in mini mules.

She also emphasizes that like their larger counterparts, mini mules require a different training style than horses.

"They'll try your patience. You must be patient with them," she says. "You have to ask them and show them why they want to do it. If a newbie manhandles them, someone is going to get hurt."

But mini mules can do anything horses can do from carrying a pack or pulling a cart to competing in jumping, dressage and roping.

"The limit is only in the imagination and patience of the mule and its owner," Patton says.

Brown agrees, noting that mini mules need attention, and they are happier – and get in less trouble – if they have a job. The minis can carry more weight and are usually more sure-footed than mini horses.



Miniature mules are defined as any mule under 50 in. at the withers. They can do anything horses can do, including pulling a cart.



Raising mules isn't for everyone, Brown and Patton note.

"Do your research and learn about the difference in training (compared to a horse). You need to know what you're getting into," Brown says.

Her mules range in price from \$600 to \$1,500, and she is particular about where the mules go.

One final piece of advice for people who buy young male mini mules: Though they are sterile, male mules should be gelded by the time they are weaned. Besides being required for showing, male mules don't need any more attitude, Brown says.

For more information and resources, check out the ADMS website, www.lovelongears.com.

High Protein Cricket Flour Finding A Market

University of Oregon students Charles Wilson and Omar Ellis worked with a commercial cricket grower and a miller to grind crickets into a high-protein flour. They sell it as a baking flour and as chocolate or peanut butter-flavored protein powder.

The high level of protein, 7.5 grams in 12 grams of powder, is just one of the nutritional benefits of crickets. It's also high in amino acids, Omega 3's and 6's, and contains iron and calcium.

There's been a growing interest in crickets since a 2013 UN report noted that edible insects could be important to future world food security. The bugs require fewer

resources to create protein, which makes raising crickets nutritionally and sustainably feasible.

"The flour has a neutral, slightly nutty taste," Wilson says.

Double or triple ground cricket powder is fine enough for smoothies and protein drinks, which attracts fitness consumers interested in less processed protein sources.

Other customers include parents who want to get more protein and iron into their children's diets. Consumers typically replace a small portion of flour with cricket flour to boost the protein and nutrition of recipes.

The final group of consumers is like

Wilson, with dietary restrictions who can't have wheat flour or are allergic to other protein sources.

"If you make or bake it, we can make it better with cricket flour," Wilson says. "There are so many different ways of using it. We're enhancing or supplementing what customers are doing already."

As a new product, cricket flour sells for a premium price (\$13.99 for 1/4 lb. for flavored mixes; \$15.25 for 1/4 lb. pure flour), but Cricket Flours is offering a 15 percent discount to FARM SHOW readers through Aug. 31, 2015 who enter "FarmShow2015" on the checkout page of the website (www.cricketflours.com/shop).



Crickets are ground into a high protein flour, which has a slightly nutty taste.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Cricket Flours, 3300 N.W. 185th Ave., Suite 108, Portland, Ore. 97229 (ph 503 830-7418; www.cricketflours.com; team@cricketflours.com).