

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.



Steve and Chuck Fettig contract graze about 1,000 cattle on their North Dakota ranch every year, a practice that has improved their soils and produced good income.

Custom Grazing Pays The Bills For North Dakota Ranchers

Steve and Chuck Fettig are 3rd generation North Dakota ranchers who've found good success in the livestock business, but not in a conventional way. Unlike many producers who raise and market their own cattle, the Fettigs graze more than 1,100 cattle a year on their land through custom contracts.

The Fettigs receive 600 to 700-lb. yearlings in early to mid-May and keep them until mid-October, when they return to the owner's feedlot. Removing the cattle before freezeup allows grass time to grow back before winter. During the grazing season the heifers gain about 1 1/4 to 1 3/4 lbs. a day and steers gain about 2 lbs a day on a ration of pure grass plus a salt and mineral supplement. Their land includes 900 acres of seeded grass and about 2,400 acres of native range grass.

Steve Fettig says the brothers used to raise crops on the seeded grassland, but the topsoil on the class 4 and 5 soils was very shallow and subsoil was mostly gravel. Chuck Fettig says managing the grassland for custom grazing has improved the soil, reduced erosion and paid them a decent return for their investment in time and equipment. Their biggest initial investment was crossfencing the rangeland into more than 30 permanent pastures using a single strand of 12 1/2 ga. high tensile wire on T-posts. Pigtail step-in posts and poly wire were used to create up to 85 additional smaller paddocks. The Fettigs move some cattle every day on or off the 15 to 20-acre parcels. The brothers say sometimes they keep cows in 5-acre paddocks for just 5 to 6 hours. They use their experience and good judgement to determine the number of animals and length of time on the pastures.

The brothers say when they raised their own cattle they had only a handful of pastures and it was easy to overgraze,

especially in a dry year. There was some erosion along drainage areas and brush was becoming a problem. After attending a holistic management seminar they were convinced that better management could improve their land and increase production.

Now one of their goals is to move cattle across pastures so the animals knock down standing litter that shades out new grass seedlings. The cattle also trample weeds so they can't sprout seeds and reproduce. Steve Fettig says ideally they like to leave 50 percent of the grass as tamped litter and have remaining grass go to seed, a process that allows soil microbes to build more carbon into the soil. They typically have cattle in a pasture or paddock only once a year, a process they learned from the grazing habits of buffalo. Chuck Fettig says buffalo will graze one area heavily, then move on and not return to where they were previously. He thinks this natural selection process gives animals a good mixture of mature and new grasses so their diet is balanced between protein and starch.

Intense grazing management like they're doing has improved the quality of their land, reduced runoff, reduced fly problems, improved brush management, and increased their income with less risk. The other big advantage is the brothers don't have to manage cattle during harsh winter months or spring calving season, a reduced workload that lets them spend more time with their families.

The Fettigs charge for animals on a per-head-per-day fee along with a small management charge. The cattle owner provides salt and mineral and is responsible for any medication and veterinary costs.

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"We can rebuild an air seeder for about \$25,000 compared to \$75,000 to \$80,000 for a new one," says Dave Houtwed of Precision Ag Solutions.

They Rebuild Air Seeders And Install Central Lube Systems

Totally rebuilding an air seeder costs 1/3 as much as a new machine, and the greasing system designed by owner Dave Houtwed will likely save money too, not to mention time.

"We can rebuild a seeder for about \$25,000 versus \$75,000 to \$80,000 for a new one," says Houtwed.

When he started the company, Houtwed would send crews out to the farm, often for days at a time. He soon began bringing the row units into a central shop for a complete rebuild, from gauge wheels and disk blades to bushings and seed hoses. Business grew from 5 or 6 rebuilds the first year to 100 or more today.

Other services provided by Precision Ag Solutions include adding fertilizer setups to planting equipment and strip-till machines, and setting up new equipment. Along the way Houtwed got the idea to simplify greasing on air seeders.

"Our greasing system eliminates getting down and crawling under the seeder to grease

every port," he says. "It cuts greasing time from an hour and a half or more to 10 to 15 min."

All too often a port gets missed, and a dry bearing is a ruined bearing. The greasing system with its 12,000-lb. test hoses is available as a kit for \$130 a row or \$160 installed. Though designed for air seeders, the system can be installed on other equipment as well.

He says customers having air seeders rebuilt or buying new air seeders bring them in for a greasing system installation. Houtwed says the firm rebuilds air seeders for customers from Texas to South Dakota and Missouri to Colorado.

For those more distant or interested in installing a greasing system themselves, Houtwed offers a 10-page, illustrated and detailed instruction guide.

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Apple Cider "Grinder" Made From Garbage Disposal

"My girlfriend and I wanted to make our own cider, but we had no way to grind up the apples before pressing. We ended up using a 1 hp WasteKing 8000 electric-operated garbage disposal, mounted inside a wooden stand," says Connor Bishop, Guilford, Ct.

According to Bishop, the garbage disposal works great "because it has all stainless steel internals and can mash the apples to an apple sauce-like consistency that's perfect for efficient juice removal. It's also equipped with a circuit breaker that trips in case of an overload."

He made the stand from 1-in. thick pine boards and 2-in. sq. legs, topping them off with several thick coats of paint to cover any cracks and joints in order to keep the stand clean. A stainless steel bowl with a large hole cut into the bottom is used to funnel apples into the disposal.

He wired the disposal to a switch that he mounted on one side of the stand. He waterproofed the switch with silicone so the machine can be safely washed down.

To help force-feed apples into the disposal, he uses a "plunger" that came with the unit and he also made a wooden "rammer", which has a rod inserted in it crosswise, as a stop. "The rammer is smaller in diameter than the plunger, so it can force apples all the way down to the disposal's grinder wheel without



Electric-operated garbage disposal mounts inside wooden stand. Bowl with hole cut into the bottom funnels apples into disposal.

contacting it," says Bishop.
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