

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](mailto:editor@farmshow.com).

## Mom & Daughter Run Alpaca Business

Morgan Stevenson just wanted to learn to crochet. She never imagined she would start raising animals to provide the yarn she needed or that she and her mother, Judy Hoepker, would start a business.

Their Rolling Oak Alpaca Ranch has grown from three alpacas to 23 since 2011. The mother-daughter team takes care of the Huacaya alpaca herd, processes fiber, dyes yarn, spins and weaves. Later on they knit and crochet the yarn into handmade items for sale.

"It's kind of the way we work if we are interested in something," Hoepker says. "Go big or go home."

When Stevenson discovered alpaca yarn and how soft and enjoyable it was to work with, she never wanted to go back to scratchy acrylic yarn again. The problem was she couldn't find a good local supply of alpaca yarn.

So she purchased three alpacas off Craigslist, and Hoepker agreed she could keep them in her barn and pasture. The women learned as much as they could by attending seminars, classes and a few alpaca shows.

"The fiber guild helped us learn fiber arts and a shop in Kentucky is where the very first spinning lesson happened. We came home with a spinning wheel, drum carder and a lazy Kate yarn spool holder," Hoepker says.

The women process some of the alpaca fleece and send some fleece to commercial processors to be made into felt, roving, yarn, mittens, socks and other wearable items that they sell locally. They also have an Etsy account and sell through Facebook and Instagram.

They make wine bags and toys out of felted alpaca and wrap felt around goat milk soap, which they also make.

"It's our second biggest seller," Stevenson says of the wrapped soap. "Our biggest seller is dryer balls. They replace dryer sheets. As they beat around the dryer they absorb moisture and eliminate wrinkles and static. They last a long time."

Alpaca fiber is hypoallergenic and the dryer balls can be washed and scented with essential oils.

As the women continue to develop new items to sell, they also share what they know through workshops and classes as more people become interested in raising alpacas.

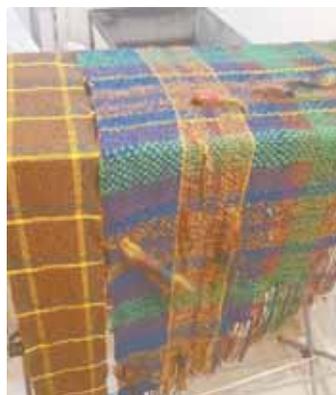
"One thing about the alpaca community is that it loves to help out new owners, so we have an extensive friends network," Stevenson says, noting raising alpacas can create a good home business. "It's a luxury fiber and just not common."

Alpacas are "easy keepers" and "easy on the pasture" and facilities, the women say. The more they learn, the more they want to do.

In using the fiber from their herd, the women have learned about quality and have become apprentice sorter/ graders so they can sort commercially. They also plan to take their alpacas to a new level – in the



Morgan Stevenson and her mother recently started a business raising alpacas, which provide the yarn they need to make handmade items for sale.



They send some of the alpaca fleece to commercial processors to be made into felt, roving, yarn, mittens, socks and other wearable items, which they sell locally.



show ring.

"We've been slowly working our way getting a higher end foundation herd," Hoepker says. They focus on bloodlines, density, brightness and other features to improve the fiber that they will make into items to sell.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rolling Oak Alpaca Ranch/ROAR Fibers, 1335 Hall Church Rd., Makanda, Ill. 62958 (Facebook/Instagram; ROAR fibers; [www.etsy.com/shop/roarfibers](http://www.etsy.com/shop/roarfibers)).



Roger Rainville grew 60 acres of milkweed last year on his Vermont farm. He says milkweed floss is in demand as a fiber for oil cleanup as well as for cold weather clothing.

## Milkweed Now A Profitable Cash Crop

Milkweed as a crop still covers only a few thousand acres, but it is rapidly becoming a cash crop for farmers who have it. Roger Rainville has 60 acres of it growing on his farm. Another 40 acres has been planted elsewhere in Vermont.

"My father is likely turning in his grave at the idea of planting milkweed," says Rainville. "It was always a weed we tried to get rid of. Now we are trying to grow it."

Rainville is on the board of directors of the Monark Cooperative, a milkweed growers cooperative. Most of the members are in Quebec, where more than 2,000 acres of milkweed were harvested last fall. The co-op contracts with members at a set rate per acre.

The milkweed floss is also in demand as a fiber for oil cleanup, as well as for cold weather clothing.

"We have a new buyer who wants to use the fiber and eventually the plant stems to make clothing thread," says Rainville. "They are a very innovative investor group."

The co-op has been working closely with McGill University in Canada, and Rainville is working with University of Vermont

extension researchers to further develop the crop. He says there is much to learn.

"We are trying to figure out the best equipment for planting, as the seed is very fine. We only plant about 3 lbs. per acre," says Rainville. "I tried no-till seeding, but didn't get good results. My best results have been with an air seeder."

Rainville notes that milkweed wouldn't grow in one field that had been in alfalfa. He is also working with the extension researchers on planting dates.

"It is supposed to take 3 years before milkweed will start to produce, but the first 7 acres we planted here had pods the following year," says Rainville. "The 40 acres I planted last year also produced pods their first year."

Since milkweed is a perennial plant, Rainville says the co-op is working on harvesting equipment that will pull the pods off while leaving the plant intact.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Roger Rainville, 124 Line Rd., Alburgh, Vt. 05440 (ph 802 796-3292; [cra@fairpoint.net](mailto:cra@fairpoint.net)).

## Swiss Yogurt Catching On Fast In Wisconsin

Markus Candinas never forgot the yogurt he ate when visiting extended family in Switzerland as a child. Swiss yogurt is drinkable with a velvety texture and made with natural ingredients that are packed with flavor from perfectly ripened fruit. Fast forward to 2017, after years of work to get it just right – his Wisconsin-made Swiss yogurt, Yodelay, won first place in the yogurt category at the American Cheese Society (ACS) Judging and Competition.

"It's opposite of other yogurts; it's not thick and heavy," Candinas explains.

"We don't take anything out that belongs there," adds Michael Hull, who co-founded Yodelay with Candinas.

"Greek yogurt strains out the whey, which is liquidy. But the liquid also carries out flavor, and whey has the protein. We leave the whey in there, so it has health benefits and carries the flavor across your tongue," Candinas explains.

A successful chocolatier ([www.candinas.com](http://www.candinas.com)), he worked on getting the process right for 14 years before introducing Yodelay in 2017. Part of the problem was its lack of ingredients.

"Sometimes doing something simpler is

more complicated," Candinas says. "We don't have stabilizers like guar gum, locust bean gum, gelatin and pectin."

What the yogurt does have is high quality, easy-to-digest milk from Brown Swiss cows. Yodelay partnered with the Voegeli Farm not far from the yogurt makers processing plant that was built specifically to make Swiss yogurt.

"We may be a market disruptor," Hull says. "We think we have the culture blend perfect, and with the mix of the fruit it comes out to be an exceptional product. It's healthy and tastes good so people will keep eating it."

Yodelay comes in seven flavors: strawberry, blueberry, rhubarb, raspberry, cherry, pineapple and peach.

By the end of 2017 it was available at about 50 locations in Wisconsin and Illinois and growing regionally.

"We are growing as carefully and as quickly as we can," Hull says. "The reception has been tremendous."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Yodelay Yogurt, 3309 Latham Dr., Madison, Wis. 53713 ([www.yodelayyogurt.com](http://www.yodelayyogurt.com); [hello@yodelayyogurt.com](mailto:hello@yodelayyogurt.com)).