

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.



Scott Dudek says the main draw for his Tommy Boy open-pollinated seed corn is low price, with the added benefit of non-GMO production which attracts organic growers.

Farmer Developed His Own Open-Pollinated Seed Corn

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

What began as a way for Scott Dudek to save money on crop inputs in 2010 has grown into a business venture that today has farmers far and wide calling him to buy seed corn.

"I grew my own open-pollinated corn on a 50 by 100-ft. plot the first year because I couldn't justify \$300 seed corn any more," says Dudek. His harvest from the initial plot provided enough seed for 9 acres the second year, and more than 20 acres the third year. In 2019 he'll have about 150 acres of open-pollinated corn for seed and a neighbor will have additional acres.

In 2018 Dudek sold 800 bags of his Tommy Boy seed for \$65 a bag untreated and \$75 a bag treated. "I could've sold more, so I'm shooting for 1,200 bags of seed for 2019 planting," he says. "I've delivered seed to customers in Iowa and Wisconsin and shipped it to Montana, Virginia and down to Mississippi. Farmers around here are also buying direct from me and I also have dealers in Wisconsin and Michigan."

Dudek says the main draw for his Tommy Boy variety is low price with the added benefit of non-gmo production, which attracts organic growers. It's very drought tolerant, has higher protein content, and a longer pollinating window than hybrid seed. Dudek developed Tommy Boy by crossing open-pollinated varieties on his own farm and then selecting plants that showed good standability and decent yield. "It was a lot of failures and dismal results before I got what I wanted, and I'm working on new varieties every year," Dudek says.

That process finds Dudek bagging, tagging and hand-pollinating about 1,000 corn plants a year to find new varieties. He's getting advice on breeding and selection techniques from a retired plant breeder and is working with a genetics supplier who has 17 varietal lines. He'll grow varieties he thinks will perform well on his own farm before releasing them for sale.

He picks the corn in September when ears are about 16 percent moisture, then dries it to 12 1/2 percent without using supplemental heat that might harm germination. His processing operation includes shelling,



He picks the corn in late September when ears are about 16 percent moisture.

cleaning, grading, sizing and bagging.

"I do everything that commercial companies do except color sorting, though obviously on a much smaller scale," Dudek says. "It's just me and two high school kids now. Hopefully that will continue to expand," he adds.

So far his customers enjoy a much lower cost for open-pollinated corn and he sees that as a good sign. "My Tommy Boy seed will yield from 100 to 140 bushels per acre and is a good buy if farmers are in the 160 to 180 bushel yield average with conventional varieties," Dudek says. "It's also a good product for silage. They can seed it at 32,000 to 34,000 plants per acre for silage and 26,000 to 28,000 for grain. Dryland rates would be 16,000 to 18,000."

Check out a video of the corn at www.farmshow.com.

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Tyler and Jennifer Dart raise chickens for meat and turn the feet into healthy, dried dog treats.

Dried Chicken Feet Dog Treats

Selling chicken feet for dog treats is an eye-catching marketing tool that also brings in extra income.

"It's worth the extra time," say Tyler and Jennifer Dart, owners of Silver Heritage Farms in Henagar, Ala. The couple raises chickens, cattle and pigs on pasture, and they sell the meat at a local farmers market.

After seeing low quality chicken feet from China being sold at a local feed store for 75 cents/each, they decided to make a healthier version.

They clip off the nails with a poultry shears, rinse the feet off, then dehydrate them for one to three days between 125 and 150 degrees. The lower temperature prevents the feet from becoming brittle and dangerous for dogs to eat. The feet are ready when they are dry and hard and there is no flex in the foot.

About \$5 worth of electricity dries 75 feet. The Darts sell them for \$1/each, but the

feet have even additional value as an educational tool.

"It's neat to see how they get people to stop," Jennifer says. Stored in a cookie jar on their farmers market table, the feet attract attention and often start a conversation about how the Darts raise and process their animals.

"The feet can bridge the gap between the average market-goer and farmer. We are passionate about our product, and most people are passionate about their dogs," she says.

Their meat and feet can also be purchased through their website.

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Cronauer says white bulls can look more orange than white due to the amount of dirt in their coats.

White Bison Attract Lots Of Buyers

If you're in the market for a white bison, get in line. Dave Cronauer has standing orders for any white calves his 10-year old bull can produce. White bison are considered sacred for Native American tribes.

"I have standing orders with \$1,000 deposits for calves expected over the next several years," says Cronauer. "We've sold them all over the country. People like them for ag tourist attractions, as well as hoping to produce and sell their own white bison calves. I know one buyer who planned to train his white bull calf for riding."

Cronauer says his own dream of having a white bison came to him more than 10 years ago. He had been raising bison for about 5 years when he woke up and told his wife Jodi that he wanted a white bull.

"She told me good luck," he recalls. "I started researching and calling bison breeders. About 3 weeks after talking to one, he called back to say a white calf had been born that day. We bought it."

The Cronauers kept their white bull when they reduced their herd size for a move to

northern Wisconsin from Pennsylvania. They are in the process of rebuilding the herd and only expect about 8 calves this year. Based on past calving, 3 or more could be white.

"We have had as high as 75 percent of the calves be white, but typically we average about 40 percent," says Cronauer.

He admits that his white bull usually looks more orange in color due to dirt in his hair. Newborn white bison calves aren't white either. Cronauer describes them as being lighter in color at birth than the standard brown bison.

"As they shed their calf hair, they turn pretty much snow white," says Cronauer. White bison bull calves are priced at \$10,000 and white heifers at \$8,000.

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