

## Sheep Milk Cheese Takes Off

Two sheep milk cheesemakers in Wisconsin have come a long way since meeting at an ag women's potluck. A shared interest grew into sales of a quarter million pounds of cheese a year. While they still sell cheese locally, online sales have them shipping from Boston to San Francisco and many states in between.

"We started making cheese in the fall of 2013 and opened our shop in the fall of 2017," says Anna Bates Thomas, Landmark Creamery. "In between, we made cheese at several different cheese plants, renting warehouse space and aging space. Now we have a shop with curing rooms in back and all our old cold storage and shipping in one place."

The other half of Landmark Creamery is the namesake, Anna Landmark. Both women had moved to the small town of Paoli, Wis. about the same time. Although Landmark's interest in cheesemaking started with milk from her 2 goats and a cow, the business formed around buying sheep milk from existing dairies.

As they learned the business, they learned to make outstanding cheeses, like a one-of-a-kind aged sheep gouda called Sweet Annie. Other cheeses such as Anabasque, Rebel Miel and Pecora Nocciola are made in the style of noted sheep cheeses from Spain, France and Italy. Until a year ago, they concentrated on selling halves or entire wheels of cheese to restaurants and distributors. Production grew, and so did their reputation. Everything was going smoothly until COVID-19. They closed the shop and watched wholesale customers close or cut back as well.

Online sales included shipping small orders of cheese beyond the local area and putting together gift boxes marketed



**Landmark Creamery sells a variety of cheese products, using different marketing methods.**

to corporations to give to employees and customers. Orders went to individuals, but also to small restaurants and shops.

"We make a higher margin on the retail sales, but it requires a great deal more work," says Bates Thomas.

She advises anyone considering starting a business like theirs to be realistic about the funds available to be invested and the time.

The Annas were fortunate having Madison, Wis., with its quarter million population, practically next door. They also had the benefit of a state with many artisan cheesemakers willing to work together.

"The cheese making community is good about sharing information, whether software advice or input sources or even a joint shipment of cheese," says Bates Thomas. "We operate on the basis that a rising tide lifts all ships."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Landmark Creamery, 6895 Paoli Rd., Paoli, Wis. 53508 (ph 608 848-1162; atb@landmarkcreamery.com; www.landmarkcreamery.com).



**End of the Rainbow Farms sells free range, organic eggs on eBay, guaranteeing safe arrival.**

## Selling Eggs On The Internet

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

The eBay offer of "4 Dozen Farm Fresh Eggs" from End of the Rainbow Farms caught our eye at FARM SHOW. Even for free range, organic eggs, the price was steep at \$28.00 plus shipping. Editor Mark Newhall suggested I place an order in mid-December to see how the process worked. A few days after Christmas they arrived.

It was well below freezing when we returned home from a day trip to find eggs had been left on our steps by the U.S. Postal Service.

Expecting to find frozen eggs, I unpacked the box to find 2 layers of multi-colored eggs. Colors varied from a light blue tint to nearly pink and many shades of brown. Some eggs were dark brown speckled.

The eBay offer had guaranteed safe arrival with either replacement or refund to back it up. Seeing how well they were packed, I could understand the confidence of the shipper. Each egg lay in its own foam pocket. Each foam layer was surrounded by

bubble wrap with paper filler filling the box.

Breaking one open to check the condition, it appeared fine. Fried eggs the next morning confirmed the quality. The only surprise was the occasional deep orange yolk. While we never confirmed that one shell color or another was responsible, the yolk color was a treat.

The eBay seller said the eggs could be left unrefrigerated for up to 2 months. We followed our standard practice of refrigerating them anyway. By the time the last eggs were consumed, we had noted one or two that seemed to be dehydrating slightly, but most were fine.

End of the Rainbow Farms offers fertile eggs, Texas white clover honey, and duck eggs too. The listing describes the seller as a hobby farm raising various poultry. Attempts to reach them through eBay or online searches were unsuccessful.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Search for farm fresh chicken eggs on eBay.com.



**Colorful and rare pheasants originated in Asia and are now being bred by Blue Creek Aviaries in the U.S.**



## He Raises Rare, Exotic Pheasants

If you think ring-necked pheasants are pretty, wait until you see the pheasants that breeders like Alex Levitskiy raise. Like the ring-necked, they originate in Asia, some so rare that they were thought to be extinct. Levitskiy turned his passion for the beautiful birds into a business.

Breeding wild bird species is full of ups and downs, says Levitskiy. He notes that you can address all the husbandry needs of a species as best you can and find the birds still don't display any breeding activity. Breeding wild birds is a learning experience, he adds.

Levitskiy advises starting with common species, such as ring-necked or domesticated poultry. He grew up around domestic pigeons and chickens, which provided him with basic husbandry skills. His parents gave him an Indian peafowl around fifth grade. From there he progressed to a variety of exotic species.

"Join bird organizations like American Pheasant and the Waterfowl Society and reach out to people. Creating a network of mentors allows one to compare different husbandry strategies and apply that knowledge to your own specific situation."

Being able to supply a natural habitat is important for exotic species, adds Levitskiy. "Understanding the bird's natural history is crucial, even if you can't replicate a mountain or rainforest," he says. "This is where improvisation comes into play. For pheasants it is ideal to have a well-planted aviary with sufficient cover to behave normally. Just because you can breed a bird in a small, muddy pen with no greenery doesn't mean it is best for the bird."

Levitskiy's website reflects his current 7 breeds of pheasant and 8 breeds of duck. He

also keeps a rare breed of goose and one of peafowl.

He enjoys the challenge of breeding a new species, especially ones not well represented in the U.S. If no one focuses on them, they will be lost to breeders here, he notes. The species in his collection range from the 'least concern' golden pheasant to the 'vulnerable' Cabot's tragopan, the 'near threatened' satyr tragopan and the 'critically endangered' Edward's pheasant. Rediscovered in Vietnam in 1966, Edward's pheasant had been thought to be extinct in the wild.

Levitskiy operates Blue Creek Aviaries as a business. However, the prices of his birds are not disclosed until buyers have been educated and informed about exotic bird care and breeding.

"I want people to take time to research a species, ask questions and determine if it is suitable for their setup," says Levitskiy. "Then we discuss cost. Most reputable breeders are not in aviculture for the profits. It is a labor of love, and the prices for the birds go to recouping the expense of raising them."

Levitskiy sells surplus breeding stock as full-grown birds, not as fertile eggs or chicks. He explains that shipping is harsh on eggs and on chicks. Chicks can be hard to raise, so he prefers to do that and sell the easier to care for (and sexed) adult.

Due to his academic schedule, Levitskiy asks readers contact him via his email and expect a likely delayed response.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Blue Creek Aviaries (alevitskiy98@gmail.com; www.bluecreekaviaries.com).

## They Sell Rare And Hard-To-Find Tires

No matter what kind of vehicle or its age, M.E. Miller Tire likely has the right tire for it. That includes exact replicas for old tractor and equipment tires for restorers who are particular about getting the details right.

"Agriculture is about 65 percent of our business - including the antique market. We look for the niche markets no one else is taking care of and off-size tires," says Ed Miller, who owns the Ohio business his father, Mahlon, started in 1970. "But we also have tires for cars, ATVs, semis - we do it all."

The company has invested heavily in having molds made to produce large runs of discontinued tires.

For example, some tractors (i.e. Farmall H, Ford 9N and John Deere R) manufactured in the early 1940s through 1960 had Firestone tires with three ribs and notches on the side. Miller Tire sells them to restorers focused on being as authentic in design as possible. They also carry tires for antique European tractors.

Big diameter, skinny tires for horse-drawn equipment and older implements are popular with collectors and people who use draft



**If you're looking for a rare or unusual tire, chances are that M.E. Miller Tire will have it or know where to find it.**

horses to farm. Miller Tire also sells rubber lugs and ribs for steel wheel tractors and implements so they can be driven on asphalt and in parades.

"We have a large selection of tires in stock. My dad always said you can't sell out of an empty warehouse," Miller says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, M.E. Miller Tire, 17386 St. Hwy. 2, Wauseon, Ohio 43567 (ph 419 335-7010; www.millertire.com).