



Photos courtesy The Furrow Magazine

These two mini-monkeys were bought at the annual Dave Hale 5-H Ranch exotic animal auction.

FROM ELK TO ELEPHANTS, THOUSANDS OF ANIMALS CHANGE HANDS EVERY YEAR

Exotic Animals: Hottest Selling New Farm "Crop"

You've never seen farm auctions like the ones springing up all over the country to sell exotic animals - such as llamas, camels, ostriches, monkeys and Sicilian donkeys - to the booming exotic livestock market. Prices of up to \$20,000 or more for individual animals are common at the auctions, which serve as one-stop shopping centers for animals that are hard to find anywhere else.

Dave Hale's annual exotic livestock auction near Cape Girardeau, Mo., is considered to be the biggest. Last year Hale had about 8,000 animals, with around 500 consignors and 5,000 potential buyers from 44 states (This year's auction is scheduled for October 16-20. Contact: The 5-H Ranch Exotic Animal Auction, Rt. 2, Cape Girardeau, Mo 63701 ph 314 243-1479 or 243-2116).

Hale houses 700 to 800 exotic animals of his own at his 5-H ranch, where the sale barn is located. "I got into the exotic livestock business 20 years ago by swapping a tractor for a camel," Hale recalls. "I learned early on that camels and other exotic animals hold their value remarkably well over the years. Of all the people who buy exotics at my sales, about three fourths are farmers. It's a great sideline business for them because they can raise the animals in a small pasture and make a good profit on the offspring."

According to Hale, the hottest-selling exotic animals today are llamas, camels, ostriches and Sicilian donkeys.

Despite the popularity of exotic animals, there's still tremendous potential for growth because only a limited number of exotic animals can be imported to the U.S. these days. "Most exotics come from a breeding base of animals that are already here. Prices are high because in a growing market it takes a long time to build up an adequate breeding supply," says Hale.

For example, a Sicilian donkey that sold for \$500 three years ago, today sells for \$1,500. A good breeding pair of ostriches that sold for \$1,000 three years ago, today can bring \$25,000 to \$30,000. Female llamas and Watusi bulls now sell for up to \$20,000.

According to Pat Hocht, editor of a magazine for exotic animal owners called



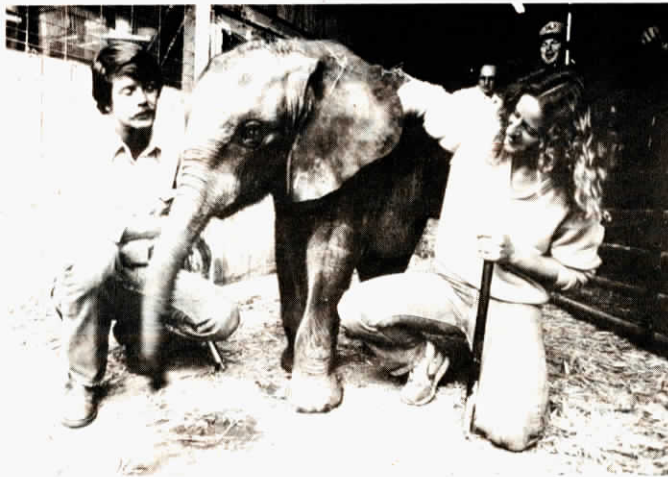
People pay big prices for tame, bottle-raised zebras, according to Hale.

Animal Finder's Guide, an exotic animal's worth at an auction is often unpredictable. "There are no established prices because there are only a few auctions. The price in the ring is whatever the buyer will pay. At a cattle auction, everyone buys for slaughter worth so there's an established price per pound. But at an exotic livestock auction, buyers range from dealers trying to fill orders for zoos to people who buy simply because they've never seen a particular species before and they're fascinated by it.

"For example, a cougar may be worth \$500 to a dealer. But someone who wants a pet cougar cub and has priced one at \$2,000 at a pet shop, may think it's a bargain at \$1,000. A zebra breeder doesn't care if a baby zebra has been bottle raised. But someone who fantasizes about leading zebras around on a leash will pay one heck of a price for a bottle-raised zebra."

Even at high prices, you can make a profit - if you know what you're doing. "Don't gamble if you can't afford to gamble," says Hocht. "Do the legwork and learn what you need to know before you buy."

Buyers and sellers of most exotic animals must have USDA animal-welfare permits. There's no charge for the permits, and they're fairly easy to get. You just have to prove that you have adequate facilities to house the animals. To get a permit, contact the veterinary division of the USDA government office in your state.



Some of the most exotic animals sell for as much as \$25,000 or more.

By Bill Gergen, Associate Editor

Exotic Livestock: A Buyer's Guide

FARM SHOW put together the following list of publications, auctions and associations involved with exotic livestock. In addition to these listings, there are associations and publications for virtually every individual species of exotic animal.

Publications.

Animal Finders' Guide Gives where-to-buy information and discusses care of exotic animals. Contains advertisements for major exotic livestock auctions. Eighteen issues per year. Subscription \$25. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, P.O. Box 99, Prairie Creek, Ind. 47869 (ph 812 898-2701 or 898-2678).

Rare Breeds Journal Contains articles on a wide variety of subjects covering all rare breeds. Published bimonthly. Subscription price \$12.00. Includes ads for exotic animal auctions. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, HCR 1, Box 45, Hebron, N. Dak. 58638 (ph 701 878-4970).

National Poultry News Covers both exotic animals and fowl. Published bimonthly. Samples \$2.00 each. Subscription price is \$12.00 (\$20.00 per year in Canada.) Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, N.P.N., P.O. Box 1011, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51502 (ph 712 322-5011).

Llama Life Quarterly newspaper covers "everything you need to know about llamas". Columns by experts on herd management, health, markets, training, shows and auctions, business and tax planning. Subscription price is \$10. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Llama Life, 925 W. Culver, Suite 200, Phoenix, Az. 85007.

Dakota Fur & Feather Club Newspaper Published monthly. Covers poultry, waterfowl, minor breeds. Samples \$2 each. Subscription price \$12.00 (\$20.00 in Canada.) Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dakota Fur & Feather Club, Willmer Pich, RR 1, Box 2A, Menoken, N. Dak. 58558 (ph 701 673-3439).

Auctions

Dave Hale's Exotic Animal Auction Holds two auctions per year. Next auction Oct. 16-20. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dave Hale, Rt. 2, Cape Girardeau, Mo 63701 (ph 314 243-1479 or 243-2116).

Woods & Waters Exotic Animal Auction Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Woods & Waters, Rt. 2, German Road, Delphos, Ohio 45833 (ph 419 695-3446).

Rare Breeds and Exotic Animal Festival Holds annual exhibition and sale. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Clyde Burch, Rt. 1, Bethel, Mo 63434 (ph 816 284-6628).

Jim Scott Exotic Animal & Bird Sale Holds four sales per year. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jim Scott, Rt. 1, Box 118, Koshkonong, Mo. 65692 (ph 417 257-1500 or 764-3400).

Raz Livestock Sales Holds five exotic animal sales per year, in January, March, May, August and November. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Hwy. 290, Harper, Tx 78631 (ph 512 864-4538).

Lolli Brothers Exotic Sales Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lolli Brothers Exotic Sales, Macon, Mo. 63552 (ph 816 385-5563 or 385-2516).

Sharpen Bros. Exotic Sale Next auction in February, 1989. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, RR 1, Box 93, Pukwana, S. Dak. 57370 (ph 605 894-4335).

Tubaugh Exotic Auction Holds four auctions per year. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jerry Tubaugh, Belle Plaine, Iowa 52208 (ph 319 444-2413 or 444-2498).

Associations

Exotic Wildlife Association Monthly newsletter provides information on feeding, breeding habits, and nutritional needs of exotic wildlife as well as handling and transportation. Active member fee is \$100 per year; associate member fee is \$25 per year. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, 1811-A Junction Highway, Kerrville, Tx 78028 (ph 512 895-4288).

American Buffalo Association Offers information on research, management, and marketing, and conducts breeder's seminars. Also sponsors educational conventions. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Buffalo Association, P.O. Box 16660, Denver, Co. 80216 (ph 303 292-2833).

The American Donkey & Mule Society, Inc. Publishes "The Brayer" newsletter. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The American Donkey & Mule Society, Inc., 2901 N. Elm, Denton, Tx. 76201 (ph 817 382-6845).

Miscellaneous

Animal Trackers International A service to help you sell at top prices. Offers exotic animals for sale and has buyers for exotic animals. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Animal Trackers International, RR 5, Box 42, Hiawatha, Ks 66434 (ph 800 338-2537, in Kan. call 913 474-3491).