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"THEY HAVE A PREHISTORIC LOOK TO THEM"

Yaks May Be Hottest New "Exotic" Breed

Tibetan yaks may be to the 1990's what llamas were to the 1980's, says Lloyd Hiebert, who has one of the country's first yak herds on his ranch near Salem, Ore.

"They have a prehistoric look to them that a lot of people find fascinating," says Hiebert, who has 50 yaks so far.

Yaks originated in the Himalayas where they're still used as beasts of burden. Most are black, some are brown, and some - called Royals - are black and white. "Royals are the rarest, although they're becoming more common," says Hiebert. "I like brown ones because they're real shaggy. Yaks have a lot of hair so they can be raised in very cold weather without shelter. Cows weigh 800 to 1,000 lbs. and bulls weigh 1,200 to 1,500 lbs., with a few up to 2,000 lbs."

In Tibet and Nepal, the animals' fine hair is combed out in the warm season and used to weave blankets, robes, and garments. Yaks are also used for meat, butter and milk. "The meat is low in cholesterol because most of the fat is stored in the hump on back or in the tail, not in the muscle. The meat is lean and fine-grained with no marbling. Some people crossbreed yaks with domestic beef cattle like shorthorns. The offspring have a higher rate of growth and are larger in size, but the meat is still low in cholesterol and high in protein.

"In addition, yaks don't eat as much as

beef cattle and are so hardy that they don't need shelter. I feed mine only grass hay."

The market for yaks started building in 1987. A mature Royal bull was worth about \$3,000 then. Hiebert got into the yak market two years ago after breeding llamas in the 1980's. He says most of his animals are now each worth \$2,000 to \$5,000. He recently paid \$15,000 for a Royal yak cow.

He got many of his animals from the Toronto zoo, which was selling out, as well as from Alberta and South Dakota ranchers.

It's estimated there are only about 450 yaks in North America. Hiebert and Larry Richards, Polson, Mont., each own about 50. Jerry McRoberts, of Gurley, Neb., owns the largest herd, about 150. Together, these three own over two-thirds of the total number of female yaks in North America.

The limited supply is largely due to import restrictions. Breeders can't bring yaks into North America from the Far East, where the animals are abundant. "It's mainly a breeding market now because there are so few of them," says Hiebert.

Last September Yak breeders formed the International Yak Society. A "Yakarama" auction is held each September.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lloyd Hiebert, 3871 Concomly Drive S., Salem, Ore. 97306 (ph 503 399-9446).

BUILT FROM OLD COMBINE, PICKUP, AND CAR PARTS

Home-Built "Mini" Deere Garden Tractor

"People are amazed when they see it," says Peter Leschasin, Rossburn, Manitoba, about the 25 hp miniature Deere garden tractor he built out of old combine, pickup, and car parts for less than \$200.

"It's the highlight of our local parade. When I first entered it, the judges were fooled and they gave it an award for best restored tractor," says Leschasin. "I pull a 5 ft. mower deck behind the tractor. I also

plan to build a snowblower for it."

The tractor is powered by a 2-cyl. gas engine salvaged from an old Deere 12A self-propelled combine. The 3-speed transmission and rear axle are from an old Chevrolet 1/2-ton truck, and the front axle is from a Model T Ford car. Leschasin narrowed both axles down about 16 in. The steering gear is out of a Model A Ford car. The 12-in. front tires are fitted to the wheel hubs

SHE MAKES CLOTHES USING SKINS OF ANIMALS KILLED ON COUNTRY ROADS

Rural Women Creates "Road Kill" Fashions

By Nancy Lowe Lonsinger

Linda Gardner, a rural woman from Coshocton, Ohio, has started one of the most unusual home businesses in America. She makes clothes out of the hides of road kill animals.

Gardner learned how to tan pelts several years ago and started out working with rabbit hides. Later she started working with deer hides given to her by friends but they were often skinned poorly and nearly all had gunshot holes in them.

If she were going to continue tanning, she needed furs that were more carefully prepared. Since she didn't want to take up hunting, she turned to a ready and constant source - animals killed on country roads. They turned out to be a ready supply so she started a business called "Road Kill Fashions", making a complete line of leather or fur shirts, jackets, boots, handbags, belts, hats, wall decorations, coin purses, and so on.

The first rule to using road killed animals for their fur is to make sure they're fresh, Gardner says. She can tell by tugging at the fur. If she can pull hair out, that means it has started to decompose and the hide will not make good fur or leather.

"Winter is the ideal time for finding prime pelts. Animals begin shedding as soon as weather turns warm and the fur isn't as nice," Gardner explains, noting that all winter long she carries plastic bags in her car to retrieve any road kill she discovers while running errands.

After fleshing the animal skins, she salts them and hangs them over a beam in the barn to cure. If she's making leather, she removes the hair by soaking the hide in lime and water. She washes all furs and hides in



All clothes and accessories Gardner wears in photo were made out of road-killed animals.

the washing machine with a strong dish detergent. She then stretches them and deters them with her hands until they become soft and pliable before she begins sewing.

Of all the items she has made, Gardner says her purses attract the most attention. Her favorite is one made from a raccoon with the head forming the closing flap.

In addition to road kill animals, Gardner also acquires stillborn calf hides from local farmers. So far she has worked with deer, rabbits, raccoons, snakes, dairy and beef calves, sheep, skunks, and muskrats. She uses slices of deer antlers and turtle neck bones for buttons, necklaces, and ornaments to hang from her belt.

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Leschasin's 25 hp miniature tractor is powered by a 2-cyl. gas engine salvaged from an old Deere 12A self-propelled combine.

from the Model T, and the 9 by 16 in. rear tires are from a Massey 26 low-profile combine. The rear fenders are off a Case backhoe and were cut down to fit the wheels.

The combine engine came with two drive shafts - one to power the combine and the other to operate the grain unloading auger. The drive shaft that operated the auger is used to chain-drive the transmission which is mounted under the engine. The transmission is connected to an 8-in. long drive shaft that's hooked up to the rear axle. "I plan to mount a pto shaft on the driveshaft so I can

use it to operate grain augers and other equipment," says Leschasin.

The steel seat and fenders were salvaged from an old Case backhoe, and the hood and air cleaner are off the combine. Leschasin couldn't find a starter for the engine so he salvaged one from a Deere M tractor. The ring gear was too big so he cut part of it off and welded it to the flywheel.

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