

INVENTS HIS OWN BROOM MACHINE

Spare Time "Sweeps Away" For This Farmer

Retired farmer Charlie Hrupsa keeps busy making brooms out of broom corn he grows himself, using a broom-making machine he designed and built.

"My Dad used to make brooms and grow his own corn. I picked it up from him," says the Felton, Del., native who's sold several hundred of his brooms in the last four years at shows and area flea markets.

When he first started making brooms he found that broom-making machines were scarce. "There are very few around so I decided to build my own. It's about 3 ft. wide and 4 ft. tall, made of ash and plywood. It has a foot-treadle drum driven by a bicycle chain and sprocket. The broom handle is pushed into a 1-in. pipe that's fastened to the sprocket, and the wire is wound around the end of it about a half a turn. The straw is then added, using as much as you need for whatever size broom you want. The straw is fastened down with the wire."

Next, Hrupsa shapes the broom by sewing it together using a steel clamp to hold it in place and a large needle

with nylon thread. Once it's sewed together, he trims the ends, but only lightly. "Untrimmed brooms are nicer and softer — people like them that way," he notes.

Hrupsa makes the broom handles out of all sorts of materials, preferring twisted hardwoods, such as sassafras and huckleberry, or he gets old broom handles from neighbors.

Last year Hrupsa grew about a half acre of broom corn. He grows two varieties — one that's 6 to 8 ft. tall and another that's 12 ft. tall. Broom corn has leaves just like field corn but only the tassel is used for brooms. The corn is planted like field corn and harvested manually with a knife in October. The corn is then hung up to dry for two to three weeks. A hand saw is used to comb out seeds that cling to the tassels.

It takes Hrupsa about 2 hours to make a broom. He sells his standard kitchen broom for \$5.00.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Charlie Hrupsa, Box 249, Rt. 1, Felton, Del. 19943 (ph 302 284-4750).



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CONTESTANTS BET ON WHERE COW WILL "DO ITS DUTY"

"Bessie Bingo": Popular New Fund-Raising Idea

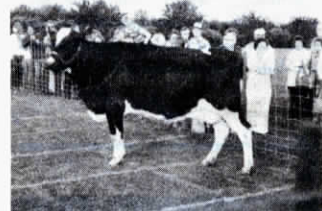
Standing around waiting to see where a cow will "mess up" may not sound like a good time to most farmers but, to the townspeople of Sherburn, Minn., it's all part of a popular new game called "Bessie Bingo".

The game is the brainchild of Sherburn Jaycees who came up with the idea to raise funds for local projects. They held their second annual Bessie Bingo event last summer and other communities from as far away as California are now staging Bessie Bingo contests, too.

Dale Schumann, who was in charge of the event for the Jaycees this year, says Bessie Bingo has been a big success.

"It creates lots of interest in town and generates substantial funds with a minimum of work. It takes only a couple hours to set up the fence and mark off the squares. Then, all you need is publicity. It's an almost sure-fire newspaper event."

The Bessie Bingo playing arena consists of a fenced in area — you can use a hockey rink with low wooden sides. In Sherburn, they fence in an area large enough to contain 100 4-ft. squares. The squares are numbered on a chart and sold to contestants for \$10 a square. Then a cow — usually volunteered by a local farmer for the event — is placed inside the fence, along with feed and water. Everyone waits outside the fence for nature to

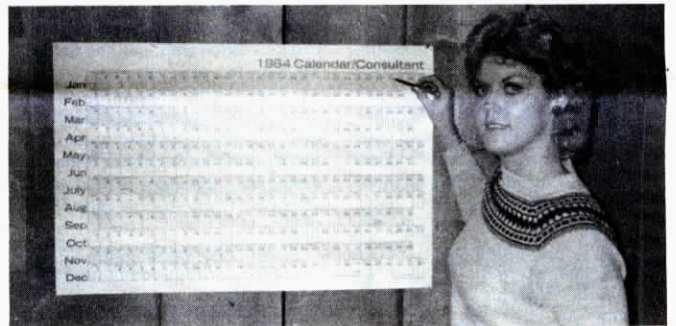


Bingo "card" is made up of 100 4-ft. squares.

take its course. Whichever square the cow messes up wins the prize. If the cow hits two or more squares, the pot is split. A "play by play" announcer keeps everyone informed.

"You never know what will happen. In our first contest, it took the cow just 15 min. This year we started at 8:30 p.m. and it took till nearly midnight to get a winner," says Schumann.

At \$10 a ticket, \$1,000 is raised. One-half of that goes to the winner and \$500 is retained by the organization. Sherburn does not let contestants know what square they "own" until the contest is over. This prevents spectators from trying to coax the cow to their square. This rule could be changed, they note, by backing everyone up far enough away so they couldn't bother the cow.



All 12 months of the year are displayed on the calendar.

GIVES WHOLE YEAR AT A GLANCE

You'll Like This New Calendar

"It holds our farm history," says Ken McKee, Emerson, Iowa about the farm calendar and record keeper that he designed and has used on his own farm for several years and which he now prints and sells.

You can see all 12 months at a glance on the calendar so it's easy to plan ahead or look back to see how you've done.

"I record the date we begin planting and the date of completion. When we sell cattle, I make a notation of the date and include the price. I note the date corn is sold and the price per bushel. We note the amount of rainfall and the first snowfall of the year as well as the general weather conditions. At year end, we can look back for a capsule summary of the year's farming events," says McKee.

The calendar is made from high quality poster paper that can be written on with any writing tool. It measures 23 by 35 in. and is light brown in color. McKee keeps one in his shop. His wife keeps another in the house for recording school and social events as well as medical appointments.

"At year's end we just tack the new calendar over the old one. Whenever we need or want to, we can look back to previous years to compare current conditions to past conditions," says McKee.

The 1984 Calendar sells for \$4.95 plus \$1.50 for shipping.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ken McKee, Rt. 1, Box 40, Emerson, Iowa 51533.