

New 'Hub Clubs': The Missing Farm-City Link

If there's friction in your town between city slickers and country folks, a group in New Ulm, Minn., stands ready to help solve the problems.

Their "Farm-City Hub Club" was started in 1974 by farm and city leaders, both to smooth the way between farm and city and to promote agriculture, New Ulm's number one industry.

"We want to promote and educate by pooling our resources, but it's also the ideal vehicle for getting city and rural businessmen together. That's why we balance our membership, with one city agri-businessman to each rural agri-businessman," explains Dick Ginn, New Ulm grocery store owner and one of the club's founding members.

The club meets regularly, alternating between a farm or city business location. The meetings are usually for breakfast and are often broadcast over the local radio station. There are often specific issues to resolve.

"Five years ago, when there was a big grain surplus and all storage facilities were full, we obtained permission for farmers to pile grain on city streets. Another time, farmers expressed the need for a place to park grain trucks when they came to town and we went to the city council to get it. It was a little thing but was the sort of problem we might not have been aware of without the club," says Ginn.

He adds that he also welcomes the chance to show his farmer friends what he does for a living. "I think many farmers think we city guys all work nine to five jobs. They often

don't realize that running a business in town is a full-time job, too, and that I probably work as many hours as they do," explains Ginn.

The Farm-City Hub Club has several specific goals: 1. To promote agriculture. 2. To educate the people in the area about the importance of agriculture to the local economy. 3. To promote New Ulm as an ag trade center by attracting new business and arranging tours of agriculture and ag-related industry in the New Ulm area. 4. To develop friendly relations between town and city, and to work on specific friction areas, acting as the go-between on such problems.

Besides regular meetings and radio broadcasts, the club works at ag-related events like fairs and farm shows. There are now about 140 members who pay a \$25 membership fee.

Recently the Hub Club decided to "go public" and promote their ideas for other communities by exhibiting at a large midwestern farm show. If you think the club idea might be useful in your community, they'll help you establish your club. There's no charge and the club has no salaried staff.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dick Ginn, Farm-City Hub Club, P.O. Box 172, New Ulm, Minn. 56073 (ph 507 354-6876).

This Repairman's A Lady

Nobody knows more about fixing electric fences than Minnesota's Minnie Butturff, of Sargeant. She's 66 years young and does a booming business repairing electric and battery-powered livestock fences in her garage/workshop.

Just the other day, an out-of-state customer stopped by to leave off a fencer for repair. Seeing Minnie, he inquired:

"Is this the place where you come to get fencers fixed?" he asked.

"Yes," Minnie told him.

"Then where's the boss?" the stranger continued.

"You're looking at her," Minnie replied.

She usually repairs 10 to 15 fencers a day, most of which arrive from farmers and dealers throughout the country via United Parcel Service. She doesn't know how many fencers

file through her workshop during an average year, but last year she paid about \$1,500 for UPS—the cost of sending material from her workshop.

As warmer weather and electrical storms approach, Minnie's fencer repair business blossoms. Lightning is the single-most contributor to damaged fencers requiring her attention. Usually, it strikes the metal box hanging outside of a barn or an attached wire. The charge burns out a plug in the box and, if strong enough, melts parts inside a lightning arrester.

Minnie can tell when an electrical storm occurs in an area because three or four days later she receives an abundance of fencers to fix. During the summer months she can expect up to two dozen fencers in a single day.

Minnie has worked on contract the past 13 years with the International Fencer Company of Chicago. The company sends her damaged fencers from as far as Washington, but most come from farms in the Dakotas, Illinois, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin.

Although the large part of her business is contracted to this Illinois firm, Minnie doesn't turn away local farmers who bring her fencers to repair.

Minnie receives the entire fencer for repair. She removes the rivets, opens it up and proceeds to examine the insides for the trouble spot. She replaces any damaged parts, closes the lid, packs it in a box, then sends it back to the company.

Her Sargeant, Minn. workshop is one of nine such fencer repair centers in the country and one of the most popular. She spends from 20 minutes to an hour on a fencer depending on the complexity of the trouble.

"I try to get them out quick, so that's probably why I get them from all over."

Her speed and quality repair work have earned Minnie such a good reputation that the amount of fencers she receives has grown steadily since her late husband Lloyd first established the fencer repair business 28 years earlier.

She has continued to operate the fencer repair business since her husband's death in 1970. The couple's six children also assisted when needed and helped run the family's appliance business for awhile.

Many times, farmers, says Minnie, might avoid having to send fencers in for repair if there's just a short in the system they can locate themselves. She recommends that farmers use a transistor radio to locate the electrical short.

"If you have a short and can't find it, take a transistor radio and walk around the fence until it gets noisy," she points out. "You can hear the beat of the fencer that way when you have a short." (Reprinted from Agri-News, Rochester, Minn.)



Agri-News Photo by Mike Williams

Minnie repairs 10 to 15 electric fencers a day in her repair shop.

Largest Living Trained Steer

"I believe Poncho is the oldest, largest living steer that's trained for riding and driving," says his owner Peter Flett, Fort DuAppelle, Sask., Canada.

Poncho, born in 1963, is half Ayrshire and half Hereford. He stands 5 ft., 6 in. tall at the shoulders, is 10 ft. around at the girth, and 10 ft. long from nose to tail. He tips the scales at 2,850 lbs.

Poncho is a popular attraction at parades and shows where he either pulls an ox-cart or is ridden "horse-back" style.



Poncho, an Ayrshire-Hereford cross, weighs 2,850 lbs.