"Best Ideas"

Feed Bag, Flag Save Nesting Birds

Here's a simple and inexpensive way to chase nesting birds out of the path of an oncoming tractor and mower.

David Phillips, Zearing, Iowa, was tired of killing or injuring birds on his CRP acres so he attached an 8-ft. length of angle iron to the front of his Deere 4630 tractor. He slipped a white feed sack onto the angle iron and fastened a long fiberglass-rodded flag to the end of it. The feed sack billows out in the wind and the flag moves around, chasing pheasants, partridge, quail and other ground nesters out of the field.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, David Phillips, Rt. 1, Zearing, Iowa 50278 (ph 515 487-7567).

Do-It-Yourself Engine Oil Additive

There's a lot of controversy about whether oil additives work but one California farmer who thinks they do has found a way to make his own for a fraction of the cost of commercial additives.

"It's cheaper than any oil additive that you can buy and has worked great for me," says Dan Starr, Temple City, Calif., who makes a teflon-based additive for $2 per quart of oil.

Starr did some research and discovered that the basic ingredient for commercial oil additives such as Slick 50 and Tough Oil is a patented, trademarked DuPont product called "Real Stuff Teflon Paste Thread Sealant" sold by Hercules Chemical Co., New York, N. Y. You can buy it at most plumbing stores where it's sold as a pipe sealant. The product is a liquid but contains some large particles. Starr mixes four tablespoons of the product with one quart of oil and runs it through a sieve - a paint strainer or cheese cloth - to strain out the bigger particles, then pours it into the engine.

"I got the idea from a friend and found that it works as good as any commercial oil additive but costs a lot less," says Starr. "I've used it for a year in the engine on my 1970 GMC 1-ton pickup and recently drove it on a 6,000-mile trip to Canada with no problems. I've also used it in my 1979 Chevrolet van and a 1973 Chevrolet Nova equipped with a 350 cu. in. engine. I've noticed a big difference in running ability on all three vehicles. My home-made oil additive quiets down the engine and causes it to idle smoother and start easier. I only use it on old vehicles because I don't know how it would affect the engine warranty. I also don't know how it would work in cold weather areas. I keep a close eye for bits of metal whenever I change oil, but I've never found any. I use the strained-out particles on pipe threads or mix them with grease and use them to pack wheel bearings. I've even poured them into differentials on older vehicles, but not vehicles equipped with positraction differentials.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dan Starr, Box 223, Temple City, Calif. 91780 (ph 818 286-9535).

Investment Opportunity in Elk

Kansas ranchers James and Walter Beesley, of Hugoton, have gone public with their plan for turning a conventional cow-calf beef operation into an elk ranch.

The Beesley brothers are offering to sell breeding elk stock to investors, then have their ranch care for them, or investors can buy animals elsewhere and deliver them to the Beesley's Mid America Cattle Co. ranch. The going rate for registered purebred elk cows is in the neighborhood of $7,000 to $9,000 per head.

Investors can participate in any one, or all, of three different plans. Plan 1: Owner receives half of the calf crop; Plan 2: Owner receives half of the calf crop less half the profit over a 12% annual return for the guarantee of no loss; Plan 3: Owner receives a 14% annual return on his investment in elk.

"In all three plans, we furnish, at no cost to the owner, all care necessary for the elk — all the feed, insurance for mortality and theft, all veterinary and medicine expenses, all bulls necessary for breeding the elk cows, and all care for the elk calves until weaning age," James points out. "The owner is responsible only for buying the elk and for delivery to Mid-America. With the present market value and using Plan 1, the owner should receive around a 20% return on investment. Plans 2 and 3 should return around 16 and 14%, respectively.

"Factors affecting rate of return include: cost of elk purchased, sex of calves, selling price of calves and original elk, and number of calves weaned. The four revenue-producing markets for elk are meat, velvet, trophy and breeding."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mid America Cattle Co., P. O. Box 818, Hugoton, Kan. 67951 (ph 316 544-4307).

Milking Profits From Milkweeds

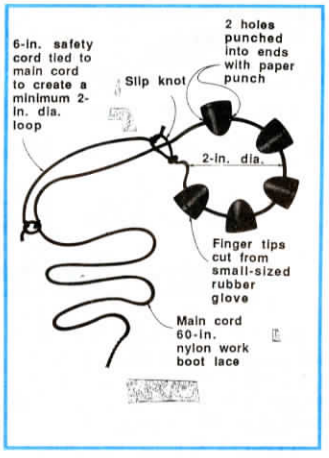
Most farmers fight milkweed but a small group of entrepreneurs in Nebraska is trying to turn it into a cash crop. They've discovered that the silky, parachute-like fibers that float in the wind have a lot of commercial potential.

Natural Fibers Corporation, Ogalla, Neb., was founded by Herb Knudsen to develop products from milkweed floss. He says the floss acutally consists of tiny hollow tubes which are superior to goose and duck down as an insulation. They're coated with a natural wax that makes them water-repellant. The company is already marketing comforters filled with a mixture of milkweed floss and goose down and is working to develop yarns, disposable diapers, facial tissue, paper pulp, and other products. Reseachers are also taking a look at using the fibers to make fabric and at the food value of oil pressed from milkweed seed.

The biggest challenge facing milkweed promoters is figuring out how to grow the crop. The company had 250 acres under contract last year with 8 growers. Insects, bacterial blight, and weeds have all caused major problems. Weeds, in particular, are tricky to kill because milkweeds themselves are susceptible to nearly every broadleaf herbicide and some of the grass herbicides ordinarily used on major field crops.

Milkweed itself is not expected to become a weed problem because only a small percentage of seed is viable and seedlings are poor competitors. Most milkweed that's spread on farms comes from rhizomes that get caught on cultivators.

Because of growing interest in milkweeds, the USDA recently made a quarter of a million dollar grant for research, part of which has already been used at the University of Nebraska's ag engineering department to modify a corn picker for harvesting milkweed pods. **(The Furrow Magazine)**



Piglet Saver

Here's an easy-to-make birthing aid that saves pigs in trouble.

Kurt Keller's "Piglet Saver" recently won first prize in an inventor's contest at the Ontario Pork Congress in Canada. The Mitchell, Ontario, hog farmer entered his invention in the contest after developing it for use on his own farm.

Keller's idea is a way to safely put a noose around a pig's head to help pull it out during a difficult birth. Consists simply of a nylon shoe lace threaded through holes punched in fingertips cut off a small-size rubber glove. The lace is tied back on itself with a slip knot. A second 6-in. length of cord is tied to this slip knot and then anchored back on the main cord. It prevents the loop from closing too tight around the pig's neck.

The rubber fingertips make it easy to put the noose around the pig's neck. You fit them over all five fingers, spreading the noose out. Once it's over the pig's head, it's easy to pull your hand away.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kurt Keller, Rt. 1, Mitchell, Ontario Canada N0K 1N0 (ph 519 348-8043).