



## Hobby Farmer's Bag of Tricks

**Put these veteran farmers' tips to work on your hobby farm—no rabbit or top-hat required.**

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Courtesy Kathy Kangas

Kathi Jurkowski can easily identify each member of her herd from a distance with letters or numbers painted in livestock marking paint.

6. Hire a Shepherd  
“Where we live, we have every kind of predator you can imagine; they’re absolutely relentless. Along with protecting our animals with electric fencing, we keep one or two Anatolian Shepherds in with our goats, especially at night. I highly recommend these dogs as guardians—they’re really amazing! We’ve even found we can use them to guard our Muscovy ducks. We were having problems with a Great Horned owl coming and killing a duck every night. At first we tried installing a night guard light, but the next morning, we found a dead duck at its base! Then we tried keeping the ducks inside at night, but they didn’t really like that. We finally came up with the idea of putting one of our Anatolian Shepherds in with the flock. We have one called Moose who likes to sit under the shelter with the ducks—it’s really funny.”

—John Brabyn and his wife, Lesley, raise Muscovy ducks, Kiko goats, Salukis, Anatolian Shepherds and Honey bees on 200-acre Salmon Creek Ranch in Bodega, Calif.

### 7. Litter Your Turkeys

“We do a deep-litter system in our turkey barn, adding fresh litter as needed and cleaning the whole thing out every two years. We’ve used all kinds of litter, but for the past two years, we’ve used mostly nice oat straw. The turkeys love it, and they spread it around for me while picking out the oats. We also shred paper to put in the barn; I’m fanatical about putting any paper we have through the shredder! The deep litter keeps the flies down, and I think it’s warmer for the birds because it’s always heating up and composting. We’re wet here, and the litter also raises the level of the barn floor up, preventing flooding. Plus, the compost is good for the garden.”

—Bill Yockey and his wife, Dayna, preserve heritage Kardosh Bronze and Midget White turkeys, along with Pilgrim geese and Buckeye and Buff Orpington chickens, on Townline Farm Poultry Reserve in Linesville, Pa.

Courtesy Lesley Brabyn

Kathi Jurkowski can easily identify each member of her herd from a distance with letters or numbers painted in livestock marking paint.

### 8. Capture the Rain

“I collect rainwater by positioning water tanks—from 40-gallon plastic tubs to 100-gallon metal stock tanks—under roof eaves. Basically, if there’s a spot near the animals where I can stick a container to catch water, I do; it saves me a lot of steps and travel time dragging around hoses and toting buckets of water. The animals either drink directly from the tanks, or I just dip buckets into the nearest one to fill their individual waterers. [For example,] I have one big tank near where we keep many of our birds and another by the sheep pen, where it collects water off the barn roof. We also have two cisterns, kept completely filled by rainwater runoff, which are nice to have when the power goes out. The cistern by the house is used to water the gardens, and the one by the barn is backup for watering livestock.

—Gail Cross and her partner, Dennis Sahm, have worked toward self-sufficiency and raised rare heritage livestock on WitnessTree Land & Livestock Farm in central Missouri since 2001. Their menagerie includes Randall cattle, Brabant Belgian draft horses, Arapawa Island goats, Jacob sheep, Blue Slate turkeys and Black Cayuga ducks.

### 9. Make It Square

If it’s important for a square or rectangle object of wood or metal to be perfectly ‘square,’ the easiest way to ensure this is to measure from its upper left corner to the lower right corner, and compare this to the length of the upper right corner to the lower left corner. [Your two lines of measurement will form an ‘X.’] If the lengths are equal, the object is square.



You can even take this idea out to the field, or wherever. For example, if you're building cattle lots, it's much easier to measure opposite corners than to try to 'lay a square down' and go from there. (This works for both square or rectangle pens.) I use this method when I'm making gates and signs for my business, as well."

—Mary Jane Repp creates signs, gates, entry arches, home decorations and other works of metal art for her business, More Than Metal. She and her husband, Eddie, grow soybeans, wheat, corn, cotton and hay on E & M Repp Farms near Fort Cobb, Okla.

#### 10. Control Pests Organically

"One of the most important areas of organic gardening for us is pest control. In large-scale conventional production, planes swoop down to spray fields with poisonous pesticides in order to kill pest insects. Maybe one-thousandth of this aerial insecticide actually prevents the infestation; the balance goes into the leaves, the soil, the water, into all forms of wildlife and into us. At our farm, we use safe and natural methods to control insect pests, including crop rotation, physical removal of insects, introducing predator species, pitting good bugs against bad bugs and companion planting."

—Diane Andersen and her husband, Dave, nurture their 12 children, plus a variety of sustainably raised animals and crops, on 200-acre Andersen Organic Farm in Ottertail, Minn. Cherie Langlois is a freelance writer and photographer who hobby farms in Kapowsin, Wash.

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