

Reader Mail

Your Letters, Comments and Feedback to Hobby Farms and Hobby Farm Home

Your letters and email messages are important to us. If you have a comment about an article you've seen in Hobby Farms or Hobby Farm Home, a tip or personal experience that you would like to share online, please email it to us at hobbyfarms@bowtieinc.com.

Holland Sighting

I just finished reading your March/April edition of Hobby Farms and read with interest the article *Scratching the Surface*.

I was pleasantly surprised to see Hollands and Chanteclers listed, as I have a small flock of each—Barred Hollands and Partridge Chanteclers.

I was, however, surprised to hear that you couldn't find a picture of the Hollands. I understand they're rare but I didn't think they were that rare!

Keep up the good articles.

Jen Cary
Windsor, Vt.

Applied Science

I was a service technician for a breeder egg facility for more than 17 years, so when I saw the New Hampshire Red on the cover of the March/April issue, it peeked my interest.

I told my wife about it, and she bought it for me the next day. I've considered raising some chickens in our backyard, but after I read your article, I'm now going to act on it after getting some ideas on small coops. They can provide meat, eggs and fertilizer for my 24- by 32-foot garden that I plan to double in size.

I found interest in the *Mother's Nature Planting Guide* article, too. I told friends that my dad planted by the moon once—it was so late when we got the ground tilled, we planted by headlight and moonlight.

Also, I acquired four plastic barrels and was going to cut the top out to catch rain until I saw how to build a rain barrel the right way (*How Do I Build a Rain Barrel*).

I installed a gutter and ran tubing between them, all for less than \$100. I caught 50 gallons in the first barrel last night.

Reggie Cowan
Internet

Chickens' Health Is Key

I read *Happy Hens, Healthy Soil* (March/April 2009), and I take exception with something in *Feeding Dos and Don'ts*. Egg shells do not cause a bird to eat eggs. A bird eats eggs because of a bad diet, sickness, too many birds in one pen, and last but not least, bad breeding.

I've raised birds for 20-plus years and have had maybe three hens who would eat eggs—two were inbred, and the third I'd missed when I was deworming and delicing them. All three were culled.

Also, leftovers mixed with scratch feed causes problems with fire ants; so does overfeeding or wasted feed. I keep oyster shell in the pens for grit and calcium. I plant rye grass and feed thawed English peas along with the rye grass during the winter.

Raising birds is work and can get costly if your feed and water isn't clean. I enjoyed the piece, and somebody just getting into raising birds would learn a lot.

Stephen Jenkins
Meridian, Miss.

More Than One Way to Weigh a Horse

I want to comment on how to get the weight of a thin horse (Livestock Q & A, March/April 2009).

Tape measures for horses can be inaccurate. To get the proper weight, measure the horse around the girth and from point of shoulder to point of butt.

Then, square the heart girth and multiply by the horse's length. Divide this total by 330. You will be within 5 pounds of the horse's true weight.

Mary Harrison
Saybrook, Ill.

Well-pump Correction

Thank you for the article in the May/June issue including our Bison Pumps (Tools of the Trade). There's one statement that doesn't represent our pumps. It states that the downside of hand pumps is that they require priming before use. In fact, the Bison Pump is self-priming.

Judy Lawson
Bison Pumps
Houlton, Maine

Fiddlehead Warning

I just typed the recipe for Pasta with Fiddleheads ("Country Fare," March/April 2009) into my recipe files and was excited to try this. I've seen these in the woods near us and thought these would be a wonderful addition to the morels we search for in the spring.

However, I found an ominous warning online that indicates that certain fiddleheads are toxic and possibly deadly. Like mushrooms, some can be poisonous.

Lana Spence
Illinois

Editor's Note: As the article mentioned, you should always check an edible-plants field guide before preparing any foods foraged from the wild. Some ferns are only edible as fiddleheads (i.e., bracken ferns) and can be poisonous if the ingested parts are at a different stage of maturity, so read and follow instructions carefully. Lamb, Well Done
I have subscribed to Hobby Farms for a while but just discovered Hobby Farm Home. I like both magazines very much.

I'm a replanted city girl who now raises sheep on the coast in Southern Oregon. But not just any sheep. I'm bringing in the Herdwick breed through artificial insemination.

I raise grass-fed, lean and scrumptious lamb. I have a hard time convincing people to try it, as many had the experience of mutton growing up. Grass-fed is better for you. The lambs are butchered at 12 months—no hormones or chemicals and definitely not fatty!

The only thing I can think is that Lynda King has only had store-purchased lamb from New Zealand! In the Grandma's Leg of Lamb recipe ("Country Fare," March/April 2009), I was very disappointed that lamb was talked down as being "fairly fatty, so with today's focus on healthy eating and lean diets, I don't serve leg of lamb as often."

Herdwick is said to be the choice of lamb that graces the Queen's table. There are many ways to prepare leg of lamb. I hope that you will publish more lamb recipes in the future that will not discredit this often-overlooked meat.

Linda Stimson
Internet

Spanish Goat Gloats

Thank you for including Sue Weaver's very enjoyable and informative article about Spanish goats in your recent issue. We would like to add a couple of pointers for those interested in starting herds or who are just curious about these

super-hardy goats.

We've had such a positive response to our efforts that we've now located almost 7,000 Spanish goats throughout the United States. Contact information for breeders is listed on the Spanish Goat Association's website at <http://www.spanishgoats.org/breed> and we're adding to it monthly.

Also, Justin Pitts was listed as the primary contact for the Spanish Goat Association in the article. Mr. Pitts is the founder of the Spanish Goat Association, but he's also involved in the hands-on management of his heritage-breeds farm. Inquiries about Spanish goats should be directed to Leslie Edmundson at 540-687-8871 or to postmaster@spanishgoats.org

Leslie Edmundson
Spanish Goat Association

Wood Choice

I enjoyed your article on how to build a small hay feeder and the step-by-step instructions; although, I was concerned about using pressure-treated wood (which is toxic) as the base in case an animal chewed on it. Good alternatives would be cedar, hemlock or tamarack—a wood used in many of our local horse barns to deter the very chewing that I would imagine goats would want to do.

Angela Wotton
Maine

Values We Hold True

As one who grew up on a "gentleman's farm" and who hopes to afford my children the same opportunity, I find your magazine a great resource.

However, the leading paragraph of John Morgan's article "Buying the Farm" in the July/August 2008 issue falls in nauseating contradiction to the principles of why we choose to farm.

Farming is about self-reliance, hard work, independence and staying "grounded" to the Earth (think Wendell Berry). It's not about tapping into the "tax dollars of others." While Morgan's comments could retroactively be played off as tongue-in-cheek, those of us working to instill guiding principles of individual responsibility to our children find the proposition of taking advantage of "free government money" to be falling far short of the high standards we hope to find in Hobby Farms.

Greg Merten
Internet

Editor's Note: We appreciate your comments regarding the article "Buying the Farm." Regardless of word choice, the article highlighted government programs, already in existence, that can help individuals get a start in farming by acquiring land. We are in favor of any assistance program that encourages more individuals to farm and steward the land. It's imperative that one be hard working and hold the values of self-reliance and personal responsibility in order to seek out, apply and receive benefits from such government programs. We understand, there is no free lunch.

Problem Solved

I was surprised to read in "Putting Down Roots" (Hobby Farms Sept/Oct 2008, pg. 76) that author Gloria Troyer finds beets in her root cellar are good for only one month. We ate our last 2007 beets just as our 2008 beets were big enough to eat. We found no adverse effects with our beets for up to six months of storage. We store them in maple and oak leaves.

Henry Hamilton
www.maineunfarm.com
Top