

Rural America gaining popularity

By Jerry Webb
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 NEWARK, Del. - A lot of people must be thinking favorably about life in rural

America these days. Census figures indicate a growing back-to-the-land movement. People who know little or nothing about rural America

or farms or the countryside, or anything else agricultural, are making the move to the country.

According to Agriculture Department estimates, at least 350,000 persons are moving from urban to rural communities each year. That's in stark contrast to the net loss of about 300,000 each year that were leaving rural America during the 60's. Now that's not to say that everyone who leaves the city and goes to rural America plans to become a farmer. A lot of them are moving to small towns scattered across the country, where they expect to find a better life than the urban rat race they left.

Some of these people are bound to be disappointed. Because swapping an urban life for a rural one involves more than just changing addresses. Many people who are disappointed with life in the city are going to be equally disappointed with life in rural America, especially if they don't understand it or are unwilling to adjust to it.

The Agriculture Department's Rural Development Service says city folk don't have to be disappointed or frustrated when they move to the country. It suggests that city people who are planning such a move check first on available jobs, housing, and services that

are in the area where they plan to relocate. Some communities welcome new residents and are equipped to handle them. Others have limited opportunities and facilities and more people only add to their existing problems.

is a very expensive and complete agricultural unit that occasionally comes up for sale. But the price tag on such property is usually prohibitive.

A lot of people who move to rural America are looking for land. They want space—room for a garden, a place to keep a horse, maybe a few acres so they can do some part-time farming while they continue their regular employment. Here in the urbanized East that dream is getting more and more difficult to attain. Land prices are unreasonable and land is unavailable. Not many farmers want to sell off ten or 20 acre parcels to urbanites so they can build their dream homes, complete with dog kennels, pony barns and equipment sheds.

Often the only compromise that exists is a lot somewhere in the country. Maybe one of a dozen houses along a country road, each on a half acre of ground barely big enough for a garden. Or the other choice

Live in the country is still a dream to a lot of people. As it becomes easier to live in rural America, I think the trend is going to accelerate. Survey after survey shows that a large part of America's population would prefer to live on the land. Their second choice seems to be a rural town somewhere close to the land with a lot of open space, fresh air, sunshine and trees. Few people, given a choice, prefer an urban environment as the best place to raise a family, or for that matter, to enjoy retirement. Of course rural people have thought this all the time. That's one of the reasons they've endured the hardships and the low income that has been characteristic of farming for so many years. They like life in rural America. Apparently a lot of other people do also.

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