

My Heart Is For Full-Time Farming

(Continued from Page B14)

to standards are steered and sold privately in the spring for beef.

"It's a good outlet for steers better than taking them to market, but not something that I want to get into in a big way," Eberly said.

"I don't like to say I fatten steers, I prefer to say fit, because I raise a good lean meat and have them butchered at 1,200 pounds. With their genetics, they put on weight fast. Everyone enjoys the meat," Eberly said.

"Because I raise Polled Herefords on a small scale, I treat each one as an individual rather than as a feedlot. A lot of people want to really fatten steers, but I want to fill them out according to their conformation and frame. Some need to fill out more than others. Nobody likes to sit a table and peel off the fat."

In 1993, Eberly bought the rights to flush a cow. Out of 25 eggs flushed, 16 were considered good viable eggs. Thirteen were implanted and three were frozen. Of the 13 embryos, nine cows became pregnant. Six heifers and three bulls were born in September. The heifers and one bull will be retained for the herd and the other two bulls will be sold.

Eberly is most proud of a gold trophy bull and dam. The dam is FHC CL Dominette 32P that was sired by Stone Ridge Sting, a 1993 trait leader.

Both Eberly and Darcey own SBF Royal Rancha 9215, which was a senior bull calf champion as a yearling at the National Genetic Focus Show in Kansas City in 1993. The bull, which also won shows in five different states, is out of SBF Royal Gypsy, a #4 Gold Trophy Dam.

"I'm not into showing heavily. I show enough locally so people know what I have but that's not my main thrust. My main thrust is to raise good quality seedstock," he said.

Eberly rents about 200 acres to

grow various mixes of timothy and alfalfa for his herd. He also supplies hay for the family horse farm. He sells the excess and also does custom square baling.

Eberly said, "I consider myself blessed. Productivity has been blessed. My heart is for full-time farming. I'm at the point where I'll soon need to farm full-time or downscale while continuing to work elsewhere."

Eberly estimates he needs about 400 to 500 acres for his farming operation to be successful, but said that he can't afford to buy in this area.

He considered moving to another state, but that has plenty of drawbacks. He said, "Living here, I have a wealth of resources to draw from."

Because the concrete business is located on the farm, Eberly can take his equipment to the full-time mechanic employed there whenever needed. Plus, he has many family members to help with the work. On an average day, Eberly rises at 4 a.m. and works to 10 p.m.

Eberly has his own horse and would like to get into roping, but he said, "I've been so busy that I only had about five minutes to ride horse this summer."

His graduation present was spending the summer at a Montana grading ranch. He helped ride the cattle to five different ranches, while the cattle grazed through 15 miles.

The whole family is enthusiastic about the Polled Herefords.

"It's a nice breed to work with. You can throw a halter on most of them and lead them out to pasture," Eberly said.

Eberly and his grandfather also raise turkeys, rhea, and ring-neck pheasants on the farm.

FFA project-keeping records have enabled Eberly to receive the American Degree and also be named the 1994 Pennsylvania Star Farmer.

About 10,000 Families Raise Emu

DALLAS, Texas — About 3,000 emu ranchers from 48 states, Australia, Canada, China, Mexico and Spain were delighted to learn last week that the first official census of the flightless birds indicates as many as 500,000 pen-raised emus in the U.S. — six times more than officials previously estimated and more than Australia's captive emus population.

That was just one of the many surprises confronting attendees at the Fifth Annual American Emu Assn. (AEA) Convention & Exposition in Nashville (Aug. 4-6). Results of oil and other product studies as well as a significant array of emu-related merchandise also demonstrated a growing interest in and demand for the emu products, from meat, leather, feather and oil to food, fashion and healthcare merchandise.

Marketing Push

"You are filling a void in our agricultural industry," said Cotton Ivy, the colorful Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture. "Be patient. Establish guidelines that will take you through the years. If emus are going to be the success we think they are going to be, you've got to communicate."

The AEA leadership immediately responded to the challenge. It rolled out a vast array of ongoing programs to convince American ranchers and farmers that the emu is one of the fastest growing, most dynamic alternative agribusinesses in the nation; that commercial uses are being intensely studied and consumers products are emerging.

"Our primary mission is to organize, educate and promote; to increase our membership," said Bettye Odle, 47, of Flower Mound, TX (near Dallas). Odle, the newly elected president of the AEA (1994-95) and owner of the Outback Bird Company, declared, "We must continue work in research and product development and provide direction for a smooth transition to a commercial market."

The current communications campaign includes news releases, scripts and slides to 10,000 newspapers, 5,000 radio stations and 1,000 TV stations; 50,000 four-color brochures to educate legislators, regulators, agricultural extension agents, bankers and potential investors; 250,000 brochures a year to respond to public inquiries resulting from a billboard campaign being rolled out by the 25 state and regional emu associations.

Additionally, public service announcements, bumper stickers and a new logo were presented as part of the campaign nucleus: "Emu, A New Frontier in Ranching."

"This industry is real!" emphasized Pierce Allman, executive director of the 5,500-member Dallas-based AEA. "Ten thousand families are involved . . . and the new entrants are motivated not by greed but an opportunity to be on the ground floor of a new industry, as well as an ability to earn a good living."

Allman acknowledged the current "breeder phase" as the flocks are expanded to a viable level for annual harvest. Citing a recent AEA study, he noted that a high number of corporate drop-outs seeking an alternative lifestyle, early retirees and young families

opting for different careers are joining traditional ranchers and farmers becoming breeders.

"This bird is 95% usable; very little waste," he said. "They are pen-raised, fed on commercially-produced ratite feed at about \$150 per bird annually and are environmentally compatible — padded feet, vegetation 'nippers' and little excrement." Observers have compared the industry to the turkey industry in its early phase when "a pair of breeding turkeys cost \$2,000 in 1927. And look at the demand for products today!"

Emu Census Results

Dr. Cindy Ford, vice president and director of research for Service Strategies International of Dallas and former director of the Center for Statistical Consulting & Research at Southern Methodist University, shocked many ranchers with the preliminary findings of the study conducted by SMU under her leadership.

"There are an estimated quarter million birds of all ages owned by (AEA) members. That projects to about a half-million total U.S. birds," counting those raised by non-members. "I was just astounded by these numbers. I never knew the industry was this large so soon," said the statistical science educator.

The study, based on surveys mailed in June, indicates a 145% growth in the number of birds during the past 12 months, and means the number of U.S. emus has surpassed the number of captive emu in Australia, where it is indigenous and the national bird. Within the AEA alone, there are about 153,000 chicks aged 0-6 months; 57,000 birds aged 6-24 months and 48,000 adult emus.

"In 1996, we project 1.5 million emus owned by AEA members and nearly 3 million in the United States," Dr. Ford said. At that point, the industry will be positioned to transition to a commercial market.

Product Studies

Emu meat, a red meat similar to beef in taste and texture, is 97% fat free, low in calories and cholesterol and contains the preferred polyunsaturated fatty acids.

"Seventy percent of the fatty acids in emu oil are unsaturated," said Dr. Margaret C. Craig-Schmidt of Auburn University's Dept. of Nutrition & Food Science. The associate professor's previous research has focused on the effects of dietary fat as it impacts cardiovascular disease, cystic fibrosis and essential fatty acid requirements in infants.

Dr. Alexander Zemtsov of Texas Tech's Health Science Center, said volunteers in a "double blind" test preferred emu oil 10-to-one over mineral oil. He said the highly penetrating oil, now used by many professional sports teams in a pure form, shows great hope for future emu oil-based ointments.

Ongoing research also is studying emu oil's potential as a "transfer agent" for topical medicinal applications.

Doug Atkinson, trainer for the Dallas Mavericks, related numerous accounts of players satisfactorily using the oil to treat bruises, strains and stiffness. The oil also is used in cosmetics and lotions.

Zoo's News?

Two Pair of Emus

The Nashville visitors took a positive parting shot at their host city, whose new 135-acre zoo was noticeably missing a key member from its exhibit of ratites (flightless birds). The AEA arranged a "breeder loan" of two pair of young emus to join the ostriches, rheas and cassowaries among the 600 animals representing 160 species.

Rick Schwartz, Director of the Nashville Zoo, welcomed the "new American livestock," noting with irony that the U.S. industry began in the 1950s with zoo stock.



Beekeeping

(Continued from Page B12)

Bob was also appointed to be a state apiarian inspector, which is basically a summer job of checking on colonies of bees for disease.

Although Bob tended his hives and offered a pollination service for years, he said, "I always had a job in town and fattened hogs."

Three years ago, Hughes retired and is concentrating more on the bee and candle-making business.

"This is a great business for someone who is retired and doesn't want to watch television all the time," Hughes said.

"I'm a niche marketer," he said of finding gift shops, stores, and market stands to sell his supplies.

The Hughes also demonstrate candle making at craft shops, fairs, and special events.

Rainbow Apiaries holds an open house each year, when candle making and beekeeping is demonstrated.

Hughes also will be teaching two different courses at the Garden Spot High School Adult Education Program. One is beekeeping and the other is candlemaking.

The beekeeping classes run every Tuesday for five weeks from Jan. 10. It's a fun hands-on course that will cover all aspects for the beginning beekeeper. The course will start with assembly equipment, selection of colony site, information about the bee season from spring through fall. Participants will learn to extract honey and the uses for honey, wax, and pollen. Tuition is \$30.

Crafting with bees wax will be taught for five successive Thursdays beginning Jan. 12. Participants will learn to roll beeswax candles, poured and dipped taper candles, and use plastic, poly and ceramic molds to form beeswax ornaments. Tuition is \$25.

Registration for the classes will be held at Garden Spot High School during daytime hours on January 3-5. Evening registration will be held in the lobby from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The Hughes may be contacted at Rainbow Apiaries, 668 Turkey Hill Rd., East Earl, PA 17519-9665, (717) 445-6674.

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