

Bed And Breakfast Seminar

On Being a Farm Wife (and other hazards)
Joyce Bupp



COLUMBUS, Ohio — People who like interaction and are looking for an alternative source of income may want to consider starting a bed and breakfast business, said Ed Smith, natural resources specialist at the East District office of Ohio State University Extension.

investment of \$1,000 to \$3,000. The major expenses are for licenses, insurance, minor fix-ups and marketing, Smith said. He estimates there are more than 500 bed and breakfasts in Ohio.

University Extension, the Marietta Small Business Development Center and the Marietta-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

More and more people are taking weekend vacations to the country, and they often want to stay at a bed and breakfast.

The potential earnings from a bed and breakfast range from a few thousand dollars per year to several hundred thousand, he said.

The program begins at 10:45 a.m. on March 1 and concludes at noon on March 2. The registration fee includes one lunch, breakfast, resource materials and one night's lodging in a bed and breakfast. Registration is \$90 for one person, \$140 for two people registering and staying together, and \$40 per person if they are not staying in a bed and breakfast on March 1.

"With some research and a modest investment, a bed and breakfast could become a successful full- or part-time business for the right type of person," Smith said. "The most successful bed and breakfast owners like to entertain, cook, show off their facilities and interact with people."

"There are a number of variables that affect the potential earnings, such as the number of bedrooms, location, the lodging charge, and the number of months the business is open throughout the year," Smith said.

The number of registrations with no overnight accommodations is limited because the experience of staying in a bed and breakfast is critical to the learning experience, Barrett said.

Smith and his wife, Ann, family and consumer sciences and community development agent at the Muskingum County office of Ohio State University Extension, have been teaching bed and breakfast seminars in Ohio and surrounding states for a number of years. They also have written a publication on starting a bed and breakfast.

During the two-day seminar, the Smiths will discuss how to start a bed and breakfast, marketing a bed and breakfast, food service, hospitality and sources of assistance. Other topics scheduled include how to prepare a business plan and Internet marketing.

Pre-registration is required by Feb. 24. For registration and more information about the seminar, contact Barrett at the Washington County Extension office, (740) 376-7431 or e-mail him at barrett.90@osu.edu. People who are interested in starting a bed and breakfast business but are unable to attend this program can receive the program materials by contacting Ed Smith at the East District Extension office, (740) 732-2381.

The Smiths will be the featured speakers at a seminar, Establishing Your Bed and Breakfast Business, held March 1-2 at Marietta College in downtown Marietta, Ohio.

A portion of the first afternoon will include a tour of local bed and breakfasts. That night, most participants will stay in a bed and breakfast to get one-on-one experience talking with the innkeepers.

The Establishing Your Bed and Breakfast Business seminar is sponsored by Ohio State Uni-

The seminar is for anyone interested in starting a bed and breakfast and for current operators looking to sharpen their skills.

said Eric Barrett, agriculture agent at the Washington County office of Ohio State University Extension who helped develop the program.

Many bed and breakfasts have started with a modest

weeks ago to check the weather, they must have brought some muskrat cousins along with them.

But the muskrats didn't go back to sleep. Instead, they're out setting traps for hapless farm wives.

Wonder what my hide might be worth?

We're getting antsy. Maybe that's because winter has seemed so long and intense this year.

There's been ice cover on our ponds since late November. That's almost unprecedented.

Snow has covered the fields and farm off and on for many weeks, nearly melting away completely some time ago, then getting a repeat layer of ice slicks and white piles of fluff. That's actually been beneficial, providing an insulating coverlet blanket to fields and plants against freeze-drying winds and root-heaving cold.

So when I walked into the house after milking one recent evening, and realized that, even in the unlit house, it was still light enough to see objects, I felt some silent, inner rejoicing. When daylight is stretching to that length, we can be sure that winter's back — while not quite broken — is at least wearing out.

And with the impatience of the family 5-year-old, I, too, am wondering when the grass will turn green again.

On closer examination, a little of it already is. At sheltered spots around the yard, protected by buildings or slopes, tiny, perky shoots are pushing up from clusters of dried and matted grass residue. On a few south-facing corners of the flower beds, daffodil bulbs have poked their durable noses out from under the leaf-mulch covers. And a neighbor's willow trees are already turning that tantalizing soft-gold shade of imminent leaf-out.

Still, if there was a shred of doubt that winter harsh edge is being worn down, it was dispelled by the annual return of some special outside visitors.

Their reassuring calls coincided with a morning of warming temperatures last week, on a day hinting more of late March than mid-February. Pushing bales down through the hay-drop to the heifer pens beneath, I fled that job at first sound of the overhead calls to dash outside.

Two dozen Canada geese were winging overhead, honking with what sounded like the sheer joy of being alive. And headed north.

Moments later, I spotted more in the meadow below the house, some poking around residue on the cornfield, others rooting through grassy spots melting out from snowcover around the ponds. And one pair was standing in the middle of the big pond, at the spot where the nesting "island" is normally located. Or was before it broke loose and settled just under the water level about the time the ice began forming on the pond late November.

The pair waddled about forlornly, as if in search of the familiar water-level, wood-pallet nest base, which we have been unable to repair because it's been frozen in solidly for months. Had I thought it might have eased their minds, this wildlife landlord would have dashed to the pond that very moment with apologies and promises of repairs at first full thaw. Guess they're getting impatient, too.

Later that morning, several more seasonal harbingers spotted our fields. Handsome in their white and gray outfits, the noisy seagulls must have come looking for worms wiggling up out of the ground as the snowmelt saturated their hibernating burrows.

Accompanying Derra Dog on her nightly meadow walk a few evenings later, I made a startling find about another visitor stirring around the meadow. As we puttered along the distant side of one of the ponds after dark, my right leg suddenly plunged knee-deep into the ground, almost pitching me on my face.

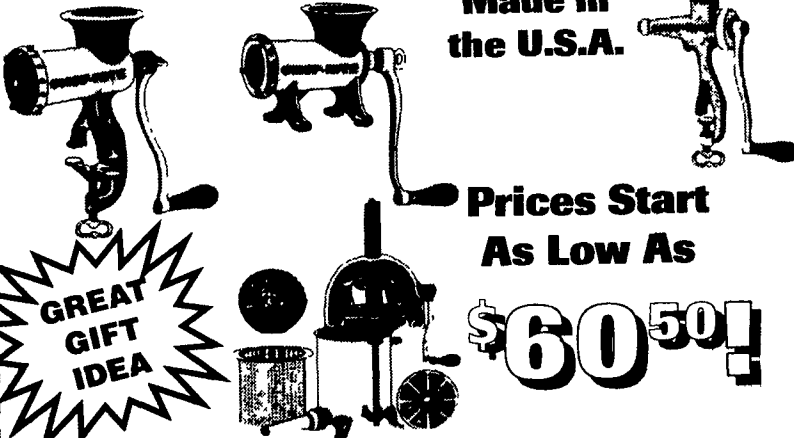
When those groundhogs crawled out of the holes a few

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