

Diesel-Powered Super Pickup Turns Heads

Predator Coachworks of DuBois, Penn., used creativity and skill to build a "super pickup" they've named the Predator XTRV.

It's made by stretching an F-650 from four to six doors and customizing nearly everything else. The unit's heavy-duty 7.2L Caterpillar C7 engine puts out 300 hp. This monster has an Allison 6-speed automatic transmission and a 4.10 gear set. Consequently, the 26,000-lb. GVWR attention-getter can reach a speed of 105 mph. It features unique two-step running boards to climb inside and has DVD navigation with plenty of snazzy F-150 seats.

"We see this as a new trend for tow vehicles in a wide variety of applications," says Predator marketing and sales manager Jeff Towns. "Trailers are getting larger and larger and we offer a lot more pulling power and durability than what's currently out there."

The unit is priced at \$175,000. The base four-door version (similarly equipped) starts at \$125,000.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup: Predator Coachworks, Box 583, DuBois, Penn. 15801 (ph 814 372-5430; fax 814 375-5370; info@predatorperformance.com; www.predatorperformance.com).

A real attention getter, the 26,000-lb. GVWR Predator "super pickup" can reach a speed of 105 mph. The unit's heavy-duty 7.2-liter Caterpillar C7 engine puts out 300 hp.



Pampered Poultry Enjoy Chicken Cottage

What looks like a pint-sized English country cottage in Erick and Linda Woods' back yard is actually an upscale chicken coop. Surrounded by a chicken run and chicken ramps, the multi-story hen house, called the Pampered Poultry Resort, is as much fun for the Woods family as for the chickens.

"Medieval English cottages have always been an interest of mine," he says. "We thought it would be fun to build one for the chickens. Now we enjoy just watching them."

The 8 by 8-ft. house has 2 by 4-in. framing with OSB board siding. It's painted to look like stucco and finished with brown trim to give the house an English Tudor style. Even the signs on the building have an English look.

A perimeter fence and overhead netting, combined with electric wire around the outside, keep raccoons out and the chickens safe. Erick and Linda mounted nesting boxes on the back side of the house, giving them out-

side access for picking eggs. Inside the house a system of ramps and walkways give the birds access to the nesting boxes as well as several small windows and finally the roosts under the roof.

Walkways like some type of chicken jungle gym also extend out and away from the house. The Woods built them for fun and for the fun of watching the chickens use them.

"We haven't had any problems with the chickens pecking each other," he says. "They use everything we put out there, walking up and down and back and forth."

Everyone, including friends and neighbors, enjoys the eggs.

"It never ceases to amaze me how people go crazy over fresh eggs," says Erick. "We cover our feed costs and then some."

The flock consists of 18 hens from a wide variety of colorful breeds, including Blue Andalusians, Silver Penciled Hamburgs, Delawares, White Rocks, Black Giants,

Multi-story hen house looks like a pint-sized English country cottage, but it's actually an upscale chicken coop. Walkways extend out and away from house. The Woods built them for the fun of watching the chickens use them.



Salmone Faverolles, Birchen, Red Cochins Bantams and others. A fresh batch of chicks will increase the laying flock to 25 to 30.

The Woods are already planning a second hen house. "It'll have a different design, and

we think we'll call it Egg Manor," says Erick.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Erick & Linda Woods, 693 Pleasant Hill Rd., Sebastopol, Calif. 95472 (ph 707 823-6489; phillcc@gmail.com).

Do-It-Yourself Charcoal

The wonderful aromas that lure Emory Skelton's neighbors to his back yard aren't just from the venison, pork and chicken sizzling in his cooker. They also come from the charcoal cooking the food - charcoal that Skelton makes himself from hardwood in a couple of 55-gal. drums.

The McCalla, Alabama resident appreciates good food and wasn't satisfied with briquettes available at the store. His wife researched how to make charcoal on the internet and he took the basic principles and came up with a technique that he uses year after year.

He starts by cutting hardwood up into small pieces, 2 in. by 5 in. or less, and lets it dry for two months. This takes some work, but isn't too difficult with a chain saw, Skelton says.

"If people want it really simple, they can pick up scraps from a hardwood floor installer. They're already dry. Just make certain the wood isn't stained or finished," Skelton suggests.

As the wood dries, prepare the 55-gal. drum by burning it out to clean it. Drill five 2-in. holes in the bottom - one in the center and four evenly spaced around it. Set the drum on three bricks and cover all but about 4 in. of the bottom of the drum with sand or dirt.

"You're making a damper that draws the air in," Skelton says.

Put some of the hardwood pieces in the

drum with paper and kindling and start a fire. Fill the drum up with wood and place the lid on top, blocking it open slightly for a 1 1/2-in gap at one side to let in air.

Let it burn for about five or six hours. The smoke will be white as the fire draws out the moisture. When it turns to a blue-grey smoke, close up the 4-in. gap at the bottom and shut the lid tight. When the fire goes out and the drum cools down, it's done.

"It's the best charcoal in the world," Skelton says.

He usually makes two drums at a time and ends up with 80 to 100 lbs. of charcoal, which he stores in paper bags or buckets.

Skelton says he likes to use oak wood charcoal for beef, and hickory wood charcoal for pork. He's also used pecan and apple wood. Any type of hardwood works, he says, with each adding a distinctive flavor.

"This charcoal burns hotter than store briquettes," Skelton warns. "So you have to learn to work with it." Because it's hotter, you can use less charcoal than you would briquettes.

Once people taste the results, Skelton doesn't believe serious outdoor cooks will want to use anything but genuine charcoal made from hardwood.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Emory T. Skelton, 920 Lakeside Dr., McCalla, Alabama 35111 (ph 205 424-4775).



Emory Skelton makes charcoal from hardwood in a couple of 55-gal. drums. He starts by cutting hardwood up into small pieces and lets it dry for two months.



He drills five 2-in. holes in bottom of barrel - one in the center and four evenly spaced around it (left). He likes to use oak wood charcoal for beef, and hickory for pork.