

New Ways To Make Money On The Farm



An eagle's head takes about two weeks to carve. The museum-quality pieces sell for as much as \$6,000.

They Turn Antlers Into Art

Lawrence Hofstad has been carving since he was nine years old. "I started commercial fishing up in Alaska when I was nine, and though there is a lot of work on a boat, there's also a lot of downtime. So I took some driftwood and started carving."

Many years later, Lawrence and his partner Steven Fisher have opened a gallery in Sioux Falls, S. Dak. and their work is being featured in a prominent sporting goods store.

"Most people think of antler and horn carvings as trinkets that are done with pocket knives. But when you're working with 40-in. long moose antlers, they stop being trinkets pretty quick," he says. "An eagle carved into a moose antler can take a full two weeks to complete, and a ram horn carving can take much, much longer. The detail and effort we put into our work results in pieces that belong in a gallery and

not a gift shop."

But the Exotic Carvings Gallery doesn't just do eagle's heads. "We can carve just about anything. If someone can describe it to us, we'll be able to carve it, so custom carving is available," he says. The pieces have even grabbed the attention of museums. "The Sturgis Motorcycle Museum and Hall of Fame has recently put on display a piece we carved for them," he notes.

Pieces can range from \$100 to \$6,000 and up. "We use the best quality antlers and horns. And because we work in detail, the horns and antlers need to be as large as possible," he says.

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M&T Mobile Farm Repairs

Door-to-door farm equipment repairs pay the bills for a father-son team near Peterborough, Ontario.

Their business, M&T Mobile Farm Repairs, offers parts and service to customers within about a 45-mile radius of their home. Matt Porter and his father, Tim, have been kept very busy since they set up their business last April.

"Dad is a heavy duty diesel mechanic and I have three years of fabrication experience," Matt says.

In addition to farming himself, Tim Porter worked much of his life in the shop of a Massey dealership until it stopped offering tractor repairs. Tim was old enough to retire anyway, but former customers would continue to contact him for private jobs.

Tim and Matt decided to make the business official so Matt quit his job at a machine shop, and the two became partners.

They still farm 250 acres and have 30 head of beef cattle, but with farming the way it is, the mobile farm repair service is what pays the bills.

"Since my wife also works I take our little boy with me wherever I go. He is 32 months old, and it works out great," Matt says. "I bring toys and a playpen along. He loves going to tractor stores for parts."

Depending on whether they are running for parts, or needing to take along bigger equipment such as an acetylene torch, the pair use either their one-ton truck, three-

quarter-ton truck or car for various aspects of their work. They usually know before heading out to a job what kind of equipment they are likely to need.

For big tasks such as motor jobs, they often bring tractors back to their own shop.

"We have a friend who trucks cattle for us and he also has a fifth wheel flatbed with a winch. His rates are extremely reasonable and most people know him from trucking their livestock, so that's how they often get the equipment moved to our shop," Matt says.

Besides doing mechanic work, Matt handles the service inquiries and also takes care of the company bookkeeping. He says his dad is a bit of a perfectionist when it comes to mechanics, so he often gets input from him, need it or not.

Most of their business comes from word of mouth, but Matt does sometimes place small ads in local magazines.

The Porters attribute some of their success to the fact that they provide the option of using used parts, making repairs more affordable for their customers.

The Porters charge \$45 per hour for their labor, which compares to \$67 per hour at the nearest shop which is two hours away.

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Chameleon Breeder Says Reptile Business Is Good

For Randy Archibald of Barrhead, Alberta, breeding and selling reptiles is an enjoyable and profitable business that supplements his income as a registered nurse. In fact, he and his wife Tracy, say they expect the reptile business to help support them during retirement.

"I've been into reptiles ever since I was a kid. It's a passion we turned into a business that makes us extra money," Randy says. "Over the last 10 years, the reptile trade has been growing by leaps and bounds as awareness and public interest has grown. They're popular pets because they require limited time and energy."

The Archibalds raise chameleons, lizards, and snakes.

The couple markets 90 per cent of their stock directly to retail pet stores and wholesale distributors. The rest are sold by word of mouth and at three trade shows each year.

The Archibalds say pet stores prefer to purchase directly from breeders. He gets \$30 to \$60 (Canadian) per animal from pet stores, depending on the type of animal.

"I found that I make the most money if I keep my production to about 1,000 animals per year," Randy explains. "One year, I produced 2,200 animals, but I had to drop my price in order to move them all, since I couldn't make the time commitment necessary to find additional markets."

Archibald notes that it's possible to find markets in Europe and other parts of the world. "I have a small business license and an import/export permit so I can also sell to the States," he notes.

He says he charges private individuals \$80 (Canadian) for male chameleons regardless of the time of year, whereas pet store prices fluctuate. Usually, pet stores at least double their money, but in spring, when supply is plentiful, they sell for significantly less.

The Archibalds produce veiled chameleons and panther chameleons, both of which can vary their color and pattern to reflect their mood or breeding state. They range from sky blue to orange to red but they are usually green. This ability to change color, combined with their unique rotating cone-eyes and two-toed feet, endear them to pet lovers.

"The more you feed them, the more eggs they will produce," he says. "I have seven breeding females and get between 20 and 60 eggs per female. The eggs take six to 10



"It's a passion we turned into a business," says Randy Archibald, who's been into reptiles since he was a kid.

months to hatch. The most time-consuming part of it is making sure that the babies start feeding properly," he says.

Archibald sells baby chameleons when they are about a month old and well established.

Chameleons reach adulthood in six to eight months and require a 30-gallon aquarium or equivalent-sized cage by that time. Randy built most of his own cages which have either glass, wire or plywood sides.

The Archibalds raise their own reptile food – enough to meet the maintenance needs of all of his adult stock. This involves a vegetable garden and indoor plastic tubs where crickets, super worms, mealworms and cockroaches reproduce.

"If you had the time and room, you could also make a very good living selling just these kind of things for pet food, especially crickets and mice," he says.

Their reptile business requires a time commitment of at least one hour per day. When they're at the height of baby production, the chores grow to up to three hours per day. The couple says there is potential to earn \$15,000 to \$18,000 of extra income from the annual sale of 700 animals.

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Matt and Tim often take Matt's young son along on jobs. "He loves going to tractor stores for parts," says the proud dad.