

If you're looking for new ways to add to your bottom line, take a look at the money-making ideas featured here and on the next page.

If you've found or heard about a new income-boosting idea, we'd like to hear about it. Send details to: **FARM SHOW Magazine, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800 834-9665) or email us at: editor@farmshow.com.**



Photo by Victoria R. Miller

Midget White turkeys have white bodies and aren't as big as most other heritage turkey breeds. Toms average 13 lbs.

## Midget White Turkeys Provide Eggs And Meat

"Midget White turkeys are excellent small farm birds. They're not as big as most other heritage turkey breeds. Their temperament is great, kind of dog-like," says Jeannette Beranger, research and technical programs manager for American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC). "Their personality and egg production stand out from other turkey breeds."

The breed dates back to the early 1960's when the late Dr. J. Robert Smyth at the University of Massachusetts worked on developing a smaller turkey breed. It didn't take off at the time, but in the 1990's one of Smyth's students, Dr. Bernie Wentworth, continued the work, and the breed has become more popular among growers who don't want to raise larger breeds.

Midget White turkeys have white bodies, red to bluish white necks, and pinkish white legs and toes. Toms average 13 lbs., and hens average 8 lbs. by 28 weeks of age. Besides producing meat, the breed lays more eggs than other breeds, averaging 60 to 80 eggs a year. Research at the French Culinary Institute in New York City revealed that the eggs are perfect for rich pastry crèmes, desserts such as Crème Brûlée and Deviled eggs.

Midget White turkeys are available through many hatcheries. Breeding stock

averages \$75/bird. Expect to pay \$7 to \$10 for day-old poults. As with all Heritage turkey breeds, they require a higher protein diet (28 percent or more) to start. Keep the brooder clean, Beranger recommends, and make sure it's evenly heated so there aren't overly hot or cold spots. Introduce the birds slowly to the outdoors so they can acclimate to their new surroundings and to bio-organisms present in the soil.

"If chickens are on the property, Heritage turkey poults are susceptible to blackhead, a deadly protozoan disease for turkeys. But if you introduce them slowly, they can build up a resistance to it over time," Beranger adds.

Fans of the breed include hobby farmers who appreciate that they eat bugs in their flower gardens, orchards and vineyards.

ALBC offers a free turkey husbandry manual as well as a manual about how to choose breeding stock, for growers interested in raising their own birds. Download the manuals by visiting <http://albc-usa.org/EducationalResources/turkeys.html>.

"This breed is a lot of fun and perfect for small farm production," Beranger says.

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## Rare Chinese Tufted Deer

One of the world's most unusual varieties of deer is the Western Chinese Tufted Deer, which Jon Wesley Conley and his family raise on their Tennessee game farm.

They originate in the remote Sechuan Mountains in China, the same place as the Giant Panda. They get their name from the "tuft" of hair on their forehead which is blackish brown and may grow up to 7 in. long. The tufts sometimes completely hide the males' small, delicate antlers.

The rest of the body is covered in coarse, spine-like hair that's dark grey or chocolate brown and white, and appears shaggy.

The natural habitat of the tufted deer is high valley jungles and mountain forests in China, ranging from 1,000 to 15,000 ft., and always close to water, but Conley says they do very well on his family's operation,

where they currently have six of the deer.

Chinese Tufted Deer are usually solitary animals, but are sometimes seen traveling in pairs. They're most active at dawn and dusk and look similar to a white-tailed deer in the way they hold their tail up when fleeing from danger, but it flops down with every bounce, making it difficult to follow their progress. Males and females both make a barking sound when alarmed and they seldom leave their home range.

"Adult tufted deer are 20 to 28 in. tall at the shoulder and females weigh up to 110 lbs.," Conley says. "In captivity, they live at least 15 years, but very little is known about them in the wild."

Tufted deer usually produce one offspring per year, but occasionally twins are born.

Like most deer, they're browsers and

## Indian Corn: A Rewarding Sideline Crop

When Don and Barb Batie strolled through a farmers market several years ago they noticed that only one vendor had Indian corn — a crop they had successfully grown in the past.

That was 2002, and the following spring the couple planted 3/4-acre of Indian corn, including miniature varieties. Since then it's become a "hobby gone bad," Barb jokes.

Because of the labor-intensive nature of the crop, Indian corn isn't a huge moneymaker, but the Baties usually net between \$1,000 and \$1,200, enough money for their annual winter vacation.

"Because it's early and a short season corn, it's attractive to corn borers and root worms, and Indian corn doesn't have built-in Bt resistance," Batie says. "So every week after it tassels you have to spray."

Don adapted a former cattle pen mister to use as a sprayer.

The Baties irrigate when necessary to ensure a crop, and harvest begins mid-August. They harvest by hand early in the morning when the husks are damp, so they aren't brittle and break off.

"Indian corn isn't worth a hoot if it doesn't have a husk on it," Batie says. Husks are pulled back right after picking and secured with a rubber band to dry on wire racks that Don built and set up in half of the garage. If the husks are extremely dry, they are soaked in water before the husks are bent back.

After some corn molded when it was put into a plastic container too soon, the Baties switched to packing the corn in cardboard boxes they pick up at grocery stores. Batie says she can pack 75 regular size ears into one box.

The Baties sell most of the corn to two wholesalers. The season to sell is short, only lasting until mid-October.

Check into available markets before you get started, Batie advises. Her family was fortunate to find a market the first year when a wholesaler needed corn after the crops in Eastern Nebraska were lost to drought. Later on, the Baties found another wholesaler — an agritourism pumpkin farm.

It's also good to diversify, Batie says. Her family raises an early season and late season Indian corn; miniature varieties in bright pink and bright blue; strawberry popcorn; and broom corn. They do some retail selling at farmers markets as well as selling mini ears to florists. Corn without husks is sold



Don and Barb Batie grow Indian corn as a sideline crop. They pull the husks back right after picking and dry the ears on wire racks.

as "critter corn" for squirrels and wildlife. Batie also makes arrangements and even bouquets for weddings and queens to carry in fall parades. Her daughters have made necklaces and bracelets out of the kernels.

Much of the labor for Indian corn occurs during the slow time for crop farming, but Batie usually finishes the season alone when her husband starts soybean and corn harvest.

"Be ready to dedicate the time," Batie says. "It's very intense for about two months. I spend 5 to 6 hours a day from the end of August to the end of September."

She adds that it's important to rotate the varieties and to keep sweet corn away from the area.

Though it's a lot of work and the profits aren't great, Batie looks forward to future Indian corn adventures.

"We view this as a way to keep the metro area people connected to farmers," Batie says. "Next year we plan to do the farmers market again. That one-on-one is so important to let people know where their food comes from."

She recalls one excited customer who said, "I just love knowing where my Indian corn was born!"

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Jon Wesley Conley and his family raise Western Chinese Tufted Deer on their Tennessee game farm. Adults stand 20 to 28 in. tall at the shoulder.

grazers. The Conleys supplement their feed in winter with various types of hay.

"I find them so beautiful to watch, especially in the wintertime because they're so shiny," he says.

There are only about 72 tufted deer in North America right now, and only two were born in zoos last year.

"I'd like to see some private owners raising these animals and building up their numbers,"

he says. "This spring I'll probably have 2 pairs for sale at \$5,000 per pair, but I'm always willing to loan breeding animals out to people, with an arrangement to split offspring, if they have proper facilities."

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