



Will Stoner made this unusual playhouse for his kids, from the junked out cab off a 1979 General semi truck.

Semi-Truck Playhouse

Will Stoner drives a 1986 GMC General truck and so do his toddler sons. The kids' 1979 General cab is parked next to the swing set by their sandbox.

"They get in it and pretend to drive, then they get out and pretend to check the trailer before they get back in," Stoner says of the unusual playhouse he set up for them.

Before he picked up the cab in a junkyard this summer, his sons loved to climb up into the General he drives for work.

"Every time it was outside the kids liked to play in it, so I thought I'd get them one of their own," Stoner says.

He drives truck for a living and seems to be influencing his sons. Not quite 4, Trent knows all the truck emblems and Jack, 1 1/2,

calls every truck a Mack.

Stoner tore out old carpet and interior panels in the old truck cab so bugs and varmints won't have places to nest, but left most everything else intact. The truck has a seat, dash, steering wheel and a CB but some crucial parts are missing — such as a key. The young father plans to get a key and make other improvements such as putting the truck cab on a stand, and adding tires, a bumper and shifter to make it more realistic.

He also may do some swapping.

"I may use some parts on my own truck," he laughs.

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Photos courtesy Jennifer Burggraft, Dairy Star

At 67 in. tall at the shoulder, the 10-year-old Holstein is one of the tallest milk cows in the world.



Rare "wooly donkeys" grow long hair and keep it throughout the summer. There are only about 100 true, long-haired donkeys in the world.

Miniature Donkeys Bred For Long Hair

A breeder of miniature donkeys for more than 15 years, Martha Howard has spent the last 5 years working to produce animals with the recessive long-hair gene. She now has donkeys that grow long hair and hold it throughout the summer.

So-called "wooly donkeys" are rare and their coats are usually shed in early summer. She estimates there are only about 100 true, long-haired donkeys in the world.

"I have a jack called Orion with hair about 9 in. long that he holds through the summer," says Howard. "His is the best I've seen for the quality of hair and for not shedding."

Howard picked up her line of wooly donkeys from a breeder who had worked on the trait for more than 20 years. Hers represent the 6th or 7th generation of the trait.

The trait is recessive and has to be present in both jack and jennet. Orion has 3 generations of wooly donkeys on the sire side and possibly 3 or even 4 on the dam's side.

"I'm breeding for long hair that doesn't have a massive undercoat," says Howard.

"Regular donkeys shed their coats in the summer and get very slick. There is a breed of mammoth donkeys that is long-haired, but their hair forms dreadlocks in the summer. Orion's long hair was the same in October as it was the previous December."

Howard plans to breed Orion. A 3/4 brother sold recently for \$4,000. She has sold some females to European buyers for more than that. She says the French, who developed the Poitou breed of long-haired mammoth donkeys, are very interested in the miniature long hairs.

The process of selecting for the long hair is slow, as donkeys have a 12-month gestation. Howard also waits to breed her jennets until they are 3 years old. Selection is further complicated by the presence of spotted long hairs.

"One out of four spotted donkeys won't produce," says Howard.

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Too Tall For A Stall

We were impressed by the size, appearance and milk production of Hallie, a 10-year-old Holstein in Bagley, Minn., that's one of the tallest milk cows in the world. At 67 in. tall at the shoulders, she is literally too tall for many stalls.

She was oversized when she was born, according to her owners, Mark and Susie Titera. By age 1, she was 60 in. tall. At age 2, she was 64 in. tall.

Hallie lives outside because she's too big for the stalls. When he milks her, Titera leads her to the center of the barn and brings the machine to her. She is a gentle cow, he says, and well trained. When his daughter, Anna, was young, she worked with Hallie and took her to shows. They have a special bond, and Hallie comes to Anna whenever she is home.

Hallie also has a special bond with a red-and-white Holstein granddaughter.

"She licks on her and follows her around," Titera says.

The calf was sired by Hvezda, Hallie's son, who is one of the top 50 Holstein bulls in the nation for type traits. Five of Hvezda's daughters were taken by their owners to World Dairy Expo 2011; three of them placed.

Hallie's progeny are good milk producers like she was. Even at 9 she produced between 24,000 and 25,000 lbs. Since she finished lactating, the Titeras have retired her and will do in vitro fertilization work with her to continue her good genes.

Though she is large, Titera notes they have been careful not to let her overeat and gain weight that would add stress to her legs. Hallie eats baleage, 15 lbs. of dried beet pulp and a little grain.

"But don't leave a gate open," Titera laughs. "She'll find where everything good to eat is on the farm."

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When he milks Hallie, owner Mark Titera leads her to the center of the barn and then brings the milking machine to her.