



Collector quality diecasts give you the chance to own a miniature of a favorite vehicle, tractor or implement.

Collector-Quality Precise Models

Dave Bell has made a lot of farm kids of all ages happy with his collector-quality, pewter and diecast farm equipment. For more than 30 years, his company SpecCast has made as many as 1,000 different units from which perhaps 10,000 variations have been produced and sold through a network of dealers.

"When we make a 1750 or 1850 Oliver, we are also making the 1755 and 1855," explains Bell. "Collectors often want the entire series, plus 6 versions of each with wide and narrow front ends, etc. That's how we can justify the precise tooling needed."

Bell admits that it is hard to put an exact

number on the number of models the company has made. At one time he kept one of each.

"If I had kept doing that, we would have a 50 by 100-ft. warehouse full," laughs Bell.

Bell spent the first half of his career with mega farm toy maker Ertl. Wanting to be his own boss, he bought a small company that made cast belt buckles, key tags and other specialty pieces. At first, he expanded into 1/50 scale pewter tractors. Then he made some spincast 1/16 scale tractors. Even then, they weren't toys.

"I knew we couldn't compete in the low-cost toy business, but we could compete in

the collectors' market," says Bell.

While the company is still selling the belt buckles and key tags, the big business is farm equipment. Over time, SpecCast expanded from original tractor manufacturers to add brands like Kinze and J&M Mfg. Products now include tillers, swingarm toolbars, pump and hose units, planters, grain carts and more. Farm trucks are also included, from classics like a 1941 Plymouth pickup to new Fords and Chevys.

"Farm miniature collectors have evolved from farmers to small town Americans whose dads, uncles or grandfathers farmed. They want a model of the tractor they remember, and then they start buying others."

Although Bell built the company around detailed models, even that has changed... for the better. "The quality has continued to improve since we started 34 years ago," he says. "Each time we make a new version of a tractor it's better than the previous one with more detail."

With new equipment, the detail is easier to produce, thanks to CAD drawings. With older equipment, SpecCast works with photos, taking measurements, making a model, reviewing it and critiquing it to make sure it's accurate.

"With CAD drawings we can do more detail, do a better job and make a better product than ever before," says Bell.

SpecCast makes precision models in a wide variety of sizes from 1/16 to 1/64 ratios. The company has licensing and partnering agreements with OEMs of all sizes and works



Newer models use CAD drawings that give models better detail than was previously available.



closely with them when making a new model from their company lineup.

Prices for SpecCast replicas vary by model and by the outlet. A 1/16-scale Oliver Super 88 diecast tractor with a 74H picker sheller varies in price from \$174 at Dalton Farm Toys to \$349.96 when purchased from Hamilton Collections.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, SpecCast, P.O. Box 368, Dyersville, Iowa 52040 (ph 563 875-8706; toll free 800 844-8067; custservice@speccast.com; www.speccast.com).

7th Generation Canning Business Still Going Strong

Shawnee Springs Market & Cannery is a 7th-generation family business that specializes in producing small batches of jams, apple butter and other canned fruits and vegetables and then private labeling the containers for hundreds of independent farm markets in 26 states.

"Our business was up 40 percent in 2020 and it looks like it'll be up at least 30 percent in 2021," says Bob Daniels, Sales Manager of Shawnee Canning, Cross Junction, Va. He believes farm markets continue to thrive because their products are fresh and wholesome and, more importantly, their customers quickly discover that farm markets are owned and operated "by nice people who know how to treat their customers right".

Shawnee Springs' roots go back to the early 1800's when the Whitacre and Braithwaite families emigrated to the Shenandoah Valley and opened a tomato cannery in Whitacre, Va. In 1903, George Whitacre and his son Lee started their first apple orchard. The company's first roadside market stand, which offered apples, peaches, pears, plums, sweet corn and other vegetables, was opened in 1958.

In 1966, William Lee and George B. Whitacre purchased Shawnee Canning Co. and moved their roadside stand to the front of the building, creating Shawnee Springs Market. In 1987, Lisa Whitacre Johnson (6th generation), daughter of William, returned to the family business to take over operation of the roadside market, which also sells fuel and prepared foods. A second retail location was opened in Winchester, Va. in 2020. Two of Lisa's sons, Scott and Alex Johnson, fill management positions with the company.

Today, the canning side of Shawnee Springs specializes in private-label jams, jellies, fruit butters, salsa, barbecue sauce, pickles, olive oil and pasta sauces. Its customer base is primarily independent farm markets in 26 states that have created their own "private



The roots of the Shawnee Springs Market in Virginia go back 7 generations. The family business now serves customers in 26 states with private label products.

label" for canned products from Shawnee Springs and sell these products (along with local produce) at their markets.

"Because of our strong track record of working with farm markets, we're able to help customers get started right with our private-label products," Daniels says. "We are able to help them flatten the learning curve by advising them about pricing and merchandising. Our products can't help a failing business, but we can help a successful business become even more successful."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Shawnee Springs, 231 Cross Junction Road, Cross Junction, Va. 22625 (ph 800 713-1414; www.shawneesprings.com).

Pygmy Goats Still Going Strong

Pygmy goats have become more popular, and the breed standard has changed slightly since they were first featured in FARM SHOW back in 1984 (Vol. 8, No. 4).

Besides maintaining a website that contains just about everything you need to know about the breed, Debbie Hosley sells pygmy goats that she and her husband raise in Norco, Calif. She also offers a marketing service to connect buyers and sellers nationally and internationally.

She purchased her first pygmy goats at a swap meet more than 40 years ago and found them "kind of contagious".

"They are small, cute, easy to take care of, and they don't need a lot of space," Hosley says, adding standards for them have evolved over the years. "Now they are shorter with a deeper body and heavy-boned."

Originating from Africa, the 16 to 23 1/2-in. tall pygmy goats are resilient and do well in extreme temperatures. It can be 10 degrees F and they will lay in the sun, Hosley notes. She has shipped them to Hawaii, Qatar and the Philippines. They are also popular in Alaska.

With prestigious awards from years of winning prizes at shows, the Hosleys and their quality registered African Pygmy goats are well known among breeders. Hosley uses those connections to market goats for customers that range from 4-Hers to celebrities such as Terry Bradshaw.

"There's a lot of international interest right now. Kuwait has its own shows," Hosley says, explaining she works with an exporter to handle the shipping regulations.

She stresses quality and follow up with all the goats she sells.

"All our babies are bottle babies, which helps makes them the ultimate pet. We blood test once a year and offer lifetime support to buyers," she says.

Always being available to answer questions is what sets Amber Waves apart, Hosley says, and is part of the purchase price.

Buyers can get goats as young as 4 weeks old (\$800/males; \$1,200/females). They are dehorned, microchipped and down to two



Amber Waves markets and sells purebred pygmy goats on their website.

bottles a day.

"Most people that want pets get a thrill out of bottle feeding," Hosley says. And many cities such as Seattle and Denver allow residents to have goats.

Anyone interested in goats can find photos, descriptions and prices on the Amber Waves website. Some are owned by other breeders in the western part of the U.S. All are purebred, registered pygmy goats that meet the standards.

While pygmy goats are more available than they were 40 years ago, Hosley offers tips for purchasing them.

"Research the breeder. Make sure the goats are tested yearly. And make sure the breeder will be there when you need support," she says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Amber Waves Bearded Silkie and African Pygmy Goats, 1320 Mountain Avenue, Norco, Calif. 92860 (ph 951 233-4231; debbie@amberwaves.info; www.amberwavespygmygoats.com).