



Low fur prices and a growing demand for pets makes it more profitable to sell kittens than pelts.

SELLS KITTENS FOR PETS, ADULTS FOR FUR

North Dakota Farmer Raises Wild Bobcats

Larry Schultz, Arnegard, N. Dak., has spent a lot of time in the outdoors in the Badlands area of the Dakotas where bobcats are common. Now he's using his knowledge of bobcats to make a business out of them, along with Canadian lynx and Norwegian blue foxes.

He has about 40 adult bobcats and lynx and is just getting started with the foxes.

"Breeding bobcats in captivity is still relatively new so it's been mostly a trial-and-error learning process," says Schultz, who began raising bobcats for their fur 13 years ago but has found that low fur prices and a growing demand for pets make it more profitable to sell kittens. In the last five years he has sold over 120 kittens as pets, working through a Minnesota broker who handles pet sales.

Bobcats come in colors that range from pale grey to blue. However, most are brown or brackskin colored.

Timing is important to turn a bobcat into become a good pet. "You have to take the kittens away from their mothers at 18 days of age and bottle-feed them for the next five to six weeks until they can drink on their own," says Schultz. "You wouldn't think a couple days would make much difference, but if you wait until they're over 20 days, it's too late. Kittens open their eyes at 14 days. At 18 days, their eyes are still milky colored and they can't see anything. At 20 days they can see, and it's too late for them to become pets.

"If they're raised right they're no different than a housecat. They're very easy to litterbox train."

He got into the bobcat business after spending several years trapping beavers. "I hated to see the beaver meat go to waste. The first four or five years I raised bobcats I fed them nothing but beaver meat and had no success at reproduction. I didn't know what the problem was until a nutritionist told me that beavers eat willow trees, which contain aspirin that neutralizes the bobcats' reproductive system. Now I also feed salt-water fish, chicken or turkey, beef, and vitamins and minerals. I made the mistake last year of feeding fresh-water fish. Within two days I lost 60 kittens when the mothers aborted. The reason is that some fresh-water fish have an enzyme byproduct that causes a vitamin B1 deficiency."

Schultz purchased his first six bobcats from a fur farm in Wyoming. After that, he and a friend, Jim Anderson, trapped more



Bobcats can reproduce in the wild for 10 or 12 years, but in captivity they'll produce offspring for 20 years.

bobcats in the Badlands. His activities are monitored by the North Dakota State Board of Animal Health which has the right to inspect his operation at any time.

Females produce a litter every year and about half the females whose kittens are removed will breed again and produce a second litter that year. Mothers with kittens won't rebreed if they're still nursing.

Schultz designed his own cages and linked them together so that he can move animals from cage to cage without having to tranquilize them. The cages are set up off the ground so they can be easily cleaned without disturbing the animals. "We use a raccoon box trap to catch the animals once a year. We try not to tranquilize them any more than we have to because the tranquilizer can damage their reproductive system and their brain," says Schultz.

When the adult cats are too old to reproduce, Schultz sells them for taxidermy or fur. Cats in the wild reproduce for 10 to 12 years, but ones in captivity can reproduce for as long as 20 years, he says.

Prices range from \$300 to \$1,500. Schultz sold one bobcat to the Seattle Seahawks professional football team for \$1,400.

Schultz recently put up a 30 by 270-ft. building that will hold 500 Norwegian blue foxes. "There are very few breeders in the U.S. or Canada. At one time there were a lot but poor prices forced most of them out of business."

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FARM SHOW

Ag World

FATHER-SON TEAM OWNS FOUR
ANTIQUE MASSEY-HARRIS 35 MODELS

Will Combines Become The Next Collectibles?

After Successful Farming magazine published a story about the four antique Massey-Harris 35 self-propelled combines owned by Charles Plott and his son Wayne, in Southington, Ohio, they got a lot of calls and letters from farmers who wanted to sell - or give away - their own combines to the Plotts.

"I got interested in collecting Massey-Harris combines because my father sold them for years," says Charles, who collects all kinds of Ferguson tractors and implements and wants to add to his collection. "In fact, three of the four combines we own are ones that he sold new in 1956 and 1957. These combines did a beautiful job and were some of the best machines of their time.

"After the story on our collection was published I got at least 75 calls and letters from farmers who wanted me to pick up their combines so that they wouldn't have to find a way to get rid of them. Some farmers even sent in photos of their machines. However, we're not set up to pick up and restore combines."

The Plotts used all four combines at the



Based on how many people have called to get rid of their old combines, the Plotts don't think the old machines are going up in value.

same time three years ago during a wet fall when fields were soft. "The big modern combines left wheel tracks 15 to 20 in. deep, but our old Massey-Harris models with 8-ft. headers left almost no wheel tracks. I also used them last year to harvest 40 acres of wheat."

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Chain Hoist Makes Deer Skinning Easy

By C.F. Marley

There's no faster way to skin a deer than to do it with an overhead chain hoist, say workers at the Fillmore Locker, Fillmore, Ill. They used the method to dress out more than 800 animals in just 3 days last fall but the idea could be used by anyone with an overhead winch.

It takes just seconds compared to knife-skinning. A hook from the hoist is slipped through the tendons on the hind legs and an anchor in the floor is attached to the back end of the deer hide. When power is applied to the hoist, the hide quickly peels off.



The locker skinned 800 animals in three days with the chain hoist.