

WEST TEXAS Country Trader



The West Texas Country Trader is a Supplement of:

Abernathy
Weekly Review
The Canyon News

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Thursday, March 17, 1994

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AgReview



South Plains

Ag News

March 18-20

OLD TRACTOR SHOW IN PLAINVIEW — The second annual Plainview Old Tractor Show will be held at Ollie Limer Center, with unloading and set up set for the 18th.

March 23

TEXAS COMMERCIAL EGG CLINIC — Ramada Inn, College Station.

March 27

TEXAS & SOUTHWESTERN CATTLE RAISERS — Will hold 117th Annual Convention in the Tarrant County Convention Center in Fort Worth.

March 29

PECAN SHORTCOURSE — Set for the Goldthwaite Civic Center in Goldthwaite.

April 16-17

COTTON GIN FESTIVAL — The 4th Annual Cotton Gin Festival will be held in Burton in South Central Texas featuring cotton gin, antique farm equipment, folklife demonstrations, parade, contests, kids stuff, entertainment and arts and crafts.

May 6-8

PAWNEE, OKLA., OLD TRACTOR SHOW — Typical old tractor event. Call 405-282-7008.

BIRD BREEDING

The market for this flightless bird means profit along with a risk

SIDELIGHTS ELSEWHERE IN THIS ISSUE:

Texas shift worker-turned rancher hatches plot to supplement his income.

Market for ostrich meat foreseen in United States.

How the ostrich market crashed.

Accident-prone ostriches have often met a 'fowl' fate

Many ostrich owners like Robin St. John are learning just how fragile their costly fowl can be.

In December, the Florida woman's \$9,500 bluenneck ostrich Agnes tripped over a neighbor's Vietnamese potbellied pig and broke its leg.

Agnes died on the operating table from shock and loss of blood, her owner said.

"It was traumatic — she was a pet," St. John said in a call from New Port Richey, Fla. "We're taking (the neighbors) to court. Everyone else thought it was hysterical. If you're not financially or emotionally involved, it is a funny story." To make matters worse, Agnes' death put her mate put her mate Stanley off his feed.

St. John, who with her husband repairs mobile homes for a living, dipped into their savings and replaced Agnes with another female bluenneck.

Adult birds have a better

See Mishaps, Page 5



Ostrich Oasis

Joyce Marshall

By Barry Schlachter

C. '94 Fort Worth Star-Telegram

BELTON — They've been rustled and smuggled, even sold when they don't exist.

The market for ostriches is feverish.

Numerous legitimate, large-scale breeding operations have been generated, many of them in Texas, now the country's biggest producers with 800 farmers.

So have pie-in-the-sky investments, including ostrich-backed IRA plans offering 200 percent profits. They target an eager, but generally ostrich-ignorant public.

"The investors are almost at blame because they don't go far enough to check those deals out," said Hugh Briscoe, 62, a Denton County breeder who was partially singed on a \$109,900 order for chicks.

"It's not all golden eggs," said Briscoe, who nonetheless figures that only a tiny percentage of ostrich opportunities are flimflam.

Briscoe, who was a full-time independent oilman, and Lockheed assembly worker David Ray of Fort Worth say ostrich farming, even on a small scale, can be profitable. Approaching it methodically, they said, can provide an economic hedge for those in such precarious industries as oil and defense.

It's according to the work you do," said Briscoe who, after starting with one breeding pair, is expanding

More on OSTRICHES, Page 5

Underlying forces continue to strengthen prices

Because of tight world stocks, the underlying market forces remain supportive to strong prices. The key indicator to the market is to maintain weekly export shipment levels that can reach the 6.5 million bale 1993/94 target. The "talk" that China may purchase some 500,000 bales from the 1993/94 crop and a million from the 1994/95 season continues to surface. But, dampening expectations that they will buy more cotton are reports of expansion in man-made fiber production. Also, to encourage 1994/95 production, the Chinese government has increased their subsidy to cotton and grain producers substantially.

With foreign cotton stocks tight, the market is keeping an eye on weather conditions that will affect the 1994 U.S. crop. Around 3 million acres of West Texas dryland cotton acreage that is normally planted in May and June remains the driest in years. May rainfall and planting conditions will be the focal point. Planting, however, is progressing well in South Texas and moving into the Coastal Bend area. Given current moisture and potential for adequate spring rainfall, conditions are promising for a good Texas crop.

Remember, if the market rallies and you find contracts scarce, you can buy a put at-the-money or slightly out-of-the-money and possibly contract later. The advantage of puts is they protect against a price decline but allow benefits from



COTTON MARKET UPDATE

Dr. Carl Anderson

higher prices. If you contract and want to protect against a possible strong planting time rally due to weather scares, you can buy a call option.

There are several pricing strategies to fit varied market plans. Also, grouping or pooling acreage helps to attract more interest from cotton buyers. The use of market advisors or joining a cooperative that offers marketing services are viable considerations, depending upon your marketing skill. The difference between planting time prices and lower harvest time prices could be substantial. With the "A." Index over 80 cents, a "POP" or marketing loan deficiency pay-

ment is not expected.

The U.S. expectations for 1994/95 look like a 17 to 17.5 million bale crop with total usage about 17 million. Domestic demand has turned slightly sluggish but exports look strong. These expectations suggest fairly tight supplies for the next 12 months. However, producer prices at 70 cents per pound and higher will encourage more acreage worldwide and discourage usage. Indications already suggest 13.3 million U.S. acres by June and a crop of 17.5 million.

Cotton contracting for forward delivery is active in Texas and across the Cotton Belt. Contract prices to producers are running from slightly over 70 cents per pound in the southern growing areas of Texas to around 65 cents in North Central and for irrigated West Texas cotton. These contracts are based on October and December futures prices, ranging from 70 to 74 cents per pound. Be sure to read the "fine print" of a contract before signing to understand the terms of the contract such as quality discounts, delivery costs and delivery dates. As more cotton is contracted, the less buyers will need at harvest. Thus, a weak market may be the result this fall.

(Dr. Carl Anderson, Texas A&M Cotton Marketing Specialist, is a noted authority on the cotton markets.)

Butchers making



Irene Hernandez with ostrich meat.

A 'steak' in Ostrich, Emu

Among the 'first' in U.S. to regularly process ratites

FLOYDADA — The John Hernandezes believe they grabbed the brass ring when they started their family-owned meat company away from its traditional focus and into ostrich processing in late 1993.

As of March 10 they had already commercially slaughtered more than 50 ostriches — possibly more than any other processor in the United States last year.

"I think we are probably in the 50s, and we're averaging 10 a month," said Hernandez. "The count is probably around 50 to 55 already."

At present, most of the slaughtering and processing is being done for a meat company in Bowie that specializes in supplying restaurants, and in mail order. He also does work on the side for individual ostrich growers in the Texas Panhandle.

"We've processed couple of other birds for individuals, they break their legs...and have to be slaughtered," he explained. "Just two weeks ago we did one for an owner at Kress," Hernandez said.

Three weeks ago he killed three ostriches to be served at the annual convention of

the American Ostrich Association in San Diego.

Hernandez said he likes working with ostrich, and hopes the industry will grow, along with his ostrich processing.

"We've got the knowledge about it so far," he said. "There will be other plants if this thing takes off but, hopefully, we will have a head start on it."

Most every serious ostrich raiser is talking about heading in the slaughter direction, Hernandez explained. And the general public is taking an interest.

"The curiosity about ostrich meat is getting the best of a lot of people," says Hernandez, who occasionally offers samples of ostrich jerky for acquaintances to sample.

"The market is getting so saturated, it is going to go to a big market for eating," believes the meat processor.

The rural West Texas couple is, today, one of the few specialty ostrich slaughter operations in America — certainly a pioneer in Texas.

And it's paying dividends for the agribusiness, the Hernandezes report. They like being in on a meat that has such an enthusiastic, though highly specialized following.

"Everybody likes the cholesterol angle, it's so much leaner," remarked Irene Hernandez, who first became acquainted with ostrich processing in June.

Their firm, Caprock Meat Company, processes about two ostriches a week on a

regular basis. The birds dress out at nearly 100 pounds of red, mostly fat free meat which sells at up to \$40 a pound.

It's all done on contract with Bowie ostrich raiser Randy Reaves of Breezy Hill Farms, which ships about half to gourmet restaurants in Fort Worth and Dallas and the rest to mail order customers around the nation.

Sought after ostrich quill hides go to major Texas manufacturers who turn them into handsome ostrich quill cowboy boots.

Cattle, hogs and seasonal slaughter of deer and other game is still important to Hernandez, don't get him wrong. But, since families raise fewer and fewer livestock of their own these days, sidelines like ostrich slaughtering is seen as a real opportunity to latch onto by Hernandez.

"Since numbers of beef hogs and sheep are going down, we had to look at alternative business," explains Irene Hernandez. The couple had to make a few adjustments when he began handling ostrich — which

he describes as not white like turkey or chicken, but very dark, red meat.

"You have to seam it all out, take the gristle and tendons out—so you end up with 100 percent meat," Hernandez explained. He compares it to venison or elk—meat he handles for hunters during hunting season.

One spin-off of dealing with exotic meats like ostrich has been the opportunity to slaughter other exotic game, like a water buffalo he dresses out. "A guy in Cleburne was test marketing it," Hernandez says. "It looks like beef, but I don't know if it will ever take off. It is similar to beef, but a little leaner."

Hernandez grew up in Wilson. After stints with Safeway, and later Furr's stores, in Midland and Lubbock, he made a decision to get back to a small community setting. The attention his ostrich meat is getting him has been good for Hernandez as he attempts to establish his business.

"This is helping us get our name around," said Hernandez, a lifelong butcher.



BIG DRUMSTICKS — Randy Reaves with ostrich carcass at Floydada's Caprock Meat Company.

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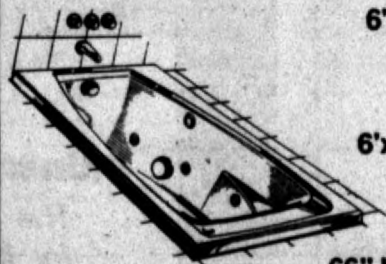


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Continued from Page 2

from a 10-acre farm to a 700-acre spread complete with slaughterhouse. "It is a very forgiving business. You can pay too much and you can still come out if you just hang in there and work. I am living proof.... We are making money."

The hot "breeders" market, where farmers and speculators buy and sell ostriches to one another until there are enough to supply butchers, has whipped up prices for a pair of proven producing birds as high as \$100,000. A 6-month-old chick can bring \$10,000.

The ostrich's red meat is touted as the healthy alternative because it tests lower in fat than chicken breast or turkey and tastes remarkably like the best cuts of beef. Predictions vary — maybe five years, maybe 10 — on when Americans will find gourmet shops stocking ostrich hamburger and steak at \$10 to \$12 a pound as the Swiss and Belgians do now.

By the time that happens, ostrich farmers say, they expect the price for an adult bird to have dropped gradually to \$350-\$1,000. Many figure that would still allow them to turn a profit.

That is based on the presumption that South Africa, the world's top producer, would still be prohibited under U.S. import restrictions from flooding the market with ostrich meat.

Even with South Africa out of the picture, some predict a dark future for the industry. Bronx Zoo ostrich expert Don Bruning, in an April 1993 interview with Barron's weekly, derided the industry as a "pyramid game," saying that only those who had slipped in early can expect to cash out.

Others, including Texas A&M University agricultural economist Jim Mjelde, say critics such as Bruning overstate the case. Mjelde likens ostrich investments to junk bonds—high profit, but high risk.

Some critics, recalling the misplaced interest in chinchillas and potbellied pigs — whose price crashed to \$150 from \$3,500 — expect the bubble to soon burst.

"It won't burst," insists Fort Worth entrepreneur Tom Mantzel, 47, a founder of the American Ostrich Association. "It's going to feather out."

"Even if it drops overnight, you'll still have your producing birds that have an intrinsic value—not like potbellied pigs that never had a market other than as a pet," he said. "Chinchillas were never, ever an industry. Ostriches have been one for 50 years and in our lifetime we're not going to supply the demand for [ostrich] meat."

For the time being, the bubble is intact. The Texas Department of Agriculture has given its stamp of approval by guaranteeing \$1.3 million in loans to farmers who raise the flightless, 350-pound birds and their smaller Australian cousin, the emu. A Louisiana breeder, Pacesetter Ostrich Farm, has floated \$4 million worth of stock on the



STUD — J.R. is stud ostrich on Diamond D Ranch, owned by Greg and Cyndi Donald of Tucumcari, N.M.

NASDAQ exchange. The Fort Worth-based ostrich association has grown from nothing in 1987 to nearly 3,000 members today.

But will they be there when prices moderate?

"I don't think 60 to 80 percent of these people will be in the ostrich market in 10 years if we really do make it to the slaughter market because they won't see big returns," said Dr. David R. Huff, one of two full-time veterinarians at Belton's 900-bird Chisholm Trail Ostrich Farm, among the largest in Texas.

"But I see real marketability and viability in the [ostrich] slaughter market, and that's why I am in it for life," said Huff, 30, who moved to Central Texas from a smaller ostrich operation in North Carolina.

Much of the current ostrich market's strategy is based on the calculation that enough people will enter the industry to grow enough birds to annually supply the 150,000 birds that the Fort Worth-based ostrich association estimates the eventual slaughter market will require and Americans would eat.

Even if the industry has the staying power, the global marketplace might intervene beforehand.

South Africa currently controls the world ostrich product trade, keeping prices high since 1959 through the Klein Karoo Agricultural Co-Operative, which has been to ostrich skin, feathers and meat what the DeBeers marketing cartel is to diamonds.

Under pressure from farmers wanting more sales outlets, the South African government stripped Klein Karoo of its legal monopoly in October. Now there's pressure to lift a

See OSTRICHES, Page 6

Mishaps, Continued from Page 2

chance of surviving than chicks — for which a 50 percent survival rate is considered good on some farms. But adults are accident-prone, said David Ray, 46, a Fort Worth ostrich farmer.

"Nine out of 10 adult deaths are due to accidents or impaction," he said. Impaction is the blocking of the intestinal tract with stones, metal bolts, nails or anything the bird can swallow. "When you transport them, they stress out, and start eating everything they're on."

Accidents can be expensive. In mid-January, Belton's Chisholm Trail Ostrich Farm lost Wilma's mate Fred, a seven-year breeder worth \$18,000, when it charged a fence, dislocating its cervical vertebrae and severing its spinal cord, dying instantly.

"They get nervous and run into the fence," said Dr. Jim D. Clark, 34, one of the farm's two veterinarians who plan to barbecue Fred's remains. "But I don't believe they're that fragile — not more than any other animal."

If Fred delivers the average amount of meat, it will come at a cost of \$240 per pound.

Closer to home, a breeder in Acton near Granbury is suing the Anheuser-Busch Co. for \$148,500 in a Fort Worth federal court, as setting that the Bud One blimp on May 13, 1992, scared two pairs of breeders into year-long infertility. No court date has been set.

The St. Louis-based brewery and the Florida blimp company are disputing David Winingham's contention that the low-flying blimp turned Bowlegs, Baby Doll, Flat Foot and Floozy off sex—a costly proposition to breeders.

"It was so low I could have hit it with a rock," said Winingham, who figured he had lost at least 39 eggs. "I don't want a million dollars or anything like that. I just want to be treated fair."

After a year of celibacy, the two pairs regained an ardent love interest in each other and were sold to a North Carolina farmer, who is proud of the birds' notoriety, Winingham said. He quoted the buyer as saying: "Hey, I'll be famous. I got the birds the blimp busted."

In far south Fort Worth, Sandra McGlothlin also is suing, maintaining that the same blimp made "my birds go crazy. They were bouncing off the fences. They stopped laying. And the next season, George would not breed." George had to be replaced by another adult male ostrich, costing \$15,000.


"I knew they were sensitive to some noises, but the blimp was just too low, just over the treeline," McGlothlin said. "We've had helicopters and planes go over, but not so close down."


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Continued from Page 5

long-standing export ban on eggs and live birds.

Saag Jonker, 52, considered South Africa's biggest ostrich farmer, whose Homestead operation slaughtered 25,000 birds last year — equal to almost half the entire U.S. ostrich population — said the ban could be lifted within a year. If so, it could wipe out U.S. breeders banking on selling eggs to start-up farmers, he said.

"I don't want to scare people off with what I'm saying, but it depends on if South Africa opens or not," Jonker said. "The genie's out of the bottle," he said of the push to lift the restriction. "We see [neighboring Zimbabwe and Namibia] selling birds and eggs. Everybody's cashing in and we're watching from the sideline."

Even taking into account the costs of shipping, incubation and quarantine, the price difference is clear: A South African egg goes for \$20, compared with \$1,000 for domestic eggs and \$250 for those imported from Namibia.

"The American farmer who bought breeders at \$50,000 a pair with the idea of selling eggs at \$1,000 wouldn't be able to compete," Jonker said in a call from Oudtschoorn, the center of South Africa's ostrich industry. "I am giving true farmer's advice."

On the other hand, collapse of the highflying breeders' market wouldn't necessarily spell the end of the fledgling U.S. industry, Jonker said. Large-scale operations, buying chicks and eggs at realistic world prices, would be able to compete with South Africa and Israel, he said.

In Fort Worth, Mantzel dismissed Jonker's prediction of an early demise to the U.S. breeders' market.

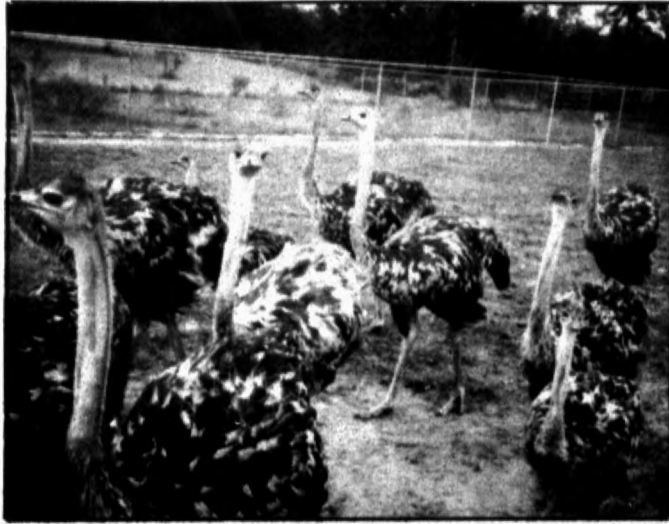
Mantzel, who breeds ostriches in Tanzania and has business interests in South Africa, said that the free export of South African and chicks faces not only political hurdles at home but also strict U.S. Department of Agriculture restrictions.

Even if that protective barrier should drop, U.S. producers will be internationally competitive by the time the slaughter market here opens, Mantzel predicted. "The numbers can still work because of our economies of scale and high-tech approach."

The high value now placed on the ostrich by the breeders' market hasn't been lost on the criminal element.

Ostrich rustling in the early 1990s was stemmed only after the intervention of the FBI and the Texas Rangers, the purchase of costly electronic security devices and the implanting of microchip IDs into the birds' necks. C.B. Wiley, a Canton-based private detective specializing in exotic game theft, estimated that \$500,000 worth of ostriches were stolen in Texas during two months in 1992.

"When the birds started going for five figures, it was going to bring in the opportunists," said William Jones, 47, a Conroe-based FBI agent who worked a number of ostrich



CURIOS — Ostriches mug the camera

cases.

The ostrich rustler has been replaced by the scam artist, particularly telemarketers who offer chicks at several thousand dollars a pair but never deliver, Jones said.

"The problem with these operations is that there are so many of them, it's hard for prosecutors to go in and go prosecute everyone. You just don't have the manpower, and crooks are aware of that," he said. "I am aware of 20-25 complaints."

In Colorado, one case was successfully prosecuted. Gary and Debra Peterson of Colorado Springs were convicted in August 1992 of bilking \$222,000 from investors by repeatedly selling the same six ostriches.

Gary Peterson got 12 years' probation for felony theft, eight years in a work-release program and, together with his wife, who got a six-year probation, was ordered to pay back clients. Instead, the couple fled to Oklahoma City, where they were arrested in early January. Earlier this month, Gary Peterson was sentenced to eight- and 12-year prison terms to run concurrently. Debra Peterson was to be sentenced March 11.

Then there are the smugglers. Government restrictions, including a 30-day quarantine in a monitored facility that could cost as much as \$1 million to build, make smuggling ostrich eggs from Africa a profitable, if illegal, activity.

Los Angeles-based Customs Service agents notified the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1991 when they discovered 200 ostrich eggs, each packaged in a Cadbury chocolate box in a crate declared to contain "roof thatching" materials from Botswana, which borders South Africa. A shipment of 250 eggs, declared as South African wine, was seized separately.

Wildlife agents allowed a controlled delivery of the "thatching" to a San Diego ostrich ranch, where they arrested an illegal South African immigrant named Philip A.R. Sargent, said Herb Curry, a Fish and Wildlife special agent.

Sargent agreed to leave the country, but turned up at an ostrich association convention in Las Vegas, where he was re-arrested on smuggling and transportation of illegal wildlife charges. Pleading guilty, the South African was fined \$50,000 and accepted the judge's recommendation that he leave the country, said Curry, who speculated that smuggling was continuing.

Industry figures such as Pat Keel, a Chisholm Trail vice president and ostrich association director, had expected that the fringe element would have faded from the scene by now.

"They haven't," Keel said. "Those are the few. Ninety-nine percent of those involved are good, hardworking people."

Blaming its old bylaws, association officials said they couldn't police the industry, she said. But in late February at its annual convention in San Diego, the group adopted in principal a new code of conduct, which sets clear against deceptive business practices. An April review by attorneys will determine whether the group could expel violators, said Chuck Ball, its executive director.

Keel cautioned would-be ostrich farmers to move cautiously in any deal.

"If you're contemplating going into a McDonald's franchise or a used-car lot, do your homework, investigate who you are doing business with."

How the ostrich market plummeted

South Africa, currently the dominating producer, saw its ostrich industry suddenly collapse 80 years ago—along with scores of "feather barons" who had struck it rich on a prolonged 19th-century fashion fad.

At the height of the plume boom, Americans tried to cash in.

In 1902, a California breeder chartered a ship from Africa to Galveston to transport 50 birds. By the time the crash struck in 1914, some 8,000 ostriches were living in Arizona's Maricopa County.

The ostrich market failed for three reasons:

- The invention of the automobile, which made the wearing of feather-adorned headgear impractical.
- Concerted campaigns by animal rights activists, who said the removal of quills from ostriches was a painful process.
- The massive mobilizations and heavy losses of World War I made feathers appear frivolous, delivering a coup de grace to the fashion. It took the South African industry more than 30 years to recover.



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TSCRA to be premier cattle event of 1994

FORT WORTH — All things considered, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association's 117th annual convention, trade show and silent auction are shaping up to be the state's premier cattle event in 1994, says John W. Jones, TSCRA president from Brady.

More than 2,500 cattle producers and agribusiness people are expected to converge on Fort Worth, historically recognized as Cowtown, for the March 27-30 business and social extravaganza.

All activities will be held in the Tarrant County Convention Center and the Worthington Hotel in downtown Fort Worth.

TSCRA is a livestock trade association based in Fort Worth with approximately 15,000 cattle pro-

ducers as members in Texas, Oklahoma and surrounding states.

"Fort Worth has been TSCRA's home for more than a century," Jones said, "and we take great pride in sharing with our members and guests the western heritage and hospitality of our city."

The speaker lineup on Monday, March 28, now includes George W. Bush Jr., Texas gubernatorial candidate; Becky Terry, immediate past president of the American National Cattle Women Inc. from Alpine; Carlos Hank Gon-

zalez, Mexico's Secretary of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources (invited) from Mexico City; Dan Koons, president of the national Catlemen's Association from Shirley, Ill.; and Tobin Armstrong, TSCRA director and member of the Beef Industry long Range Task Force from Armstrong.

Scheduled for Tuesday, March 29, are Jones, Kay Bailey Hutchison, U.S. senator from Dallas; Gerald M. Finkel, the Columbia, S.C., attorney who won the Lucas vs. South Carolina "property takings" case

before the U.S. Supreme Court; Travis Leonard Passmore, retired Austin attorney; Jim Simons, chief executive of the National Finance Credit Corp. in Fort Worth; Rick Perry, Texas Agriculture Commissioner in Austin; and Sir Phillip Richardson, international futurist and economist.

On Wednesday, March 30, Pete Laney, Texas

Speaker of the House from Hale Center, will kick things off at the TSCRA PAC breakfast. Speaking at the final general session that follows the breakfast will be Jones; Anita Brown, president of the Texas Cattle Women Inc. from Wheeler; Don C. King, secretary-general manager from Fort Worth; Tom Beard, Resolutions Committee chairman from

Alpine; and James L. Powell, Nominating Committee chairman from Fort McKavett.

Election of new officers and a new board of directors will conclude the convention by Wednesday noon.

Also meeting in conjunction with TSCRA will be the Texas Cattle Women and the Texas Purebred Cattle Alliance, Jones said.

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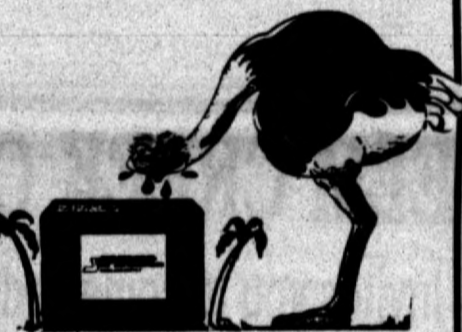


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USDA tightens import controls

WASHINGTON (AP) — In an effort to prevent smuggling of a group of birds that includes ostriches and emus, the Agriculture Department is requiring that record-keeping and identification requirements be met in their country of origin.

Import requirements for ratites are strict because the birds can carry diseases that could devastate the poultry and livestock industries if introduced into the United States.

"These requirements provide us with sufficient information to ensure that imported ratites are not smuggled or otherwise unqualified for importation to the United States because they may have been exposed to communicable diseases," said Donald Luchsinger, acting deputy for veterinary services in USDA's Animal and Plant and Health Inspection Service.

Ratites are flightless birds such as ostriches and emus. An estimated 52,500 ratites and their eggs are expected to be imported into the United States this year. The total value of ratites released from USDA quarantine is estimated at \$34.5 million.

Before an import permit can be issued for ratites from another country, a health inspection service veterinarian must inspect the foreign farm to ensure that the flocks are pen-raised and contain a sufficient number of breeding pairs to produce the number of ratites or eggs intended for export.

The new rule requires that all pen-raised ratites from approved farms have microchip implants that identify them by number before shipment to the United States.

This microchip identification information will be

used by veterinary officials of the exporting country and health inspection service veterinarians to cross-reference the identities of the birds by flock in an effort to prevent smuggling.

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Porters' business started as 'nest egg'

By LINDA MAXWELL

Are you looking for a 'nest egg' investment?

How about investing IN a nest egg — or what comes out of them?

Mickey and Doak Porter say there is a lot of money to be made in the ostrich business, and they should know — they've been in it for going on four years, the last year in a really big way.

The father and son team, along with their wives, set up Porter's Ostrich Ranch a few miles south of Hereford alongside of US 385 last January and have been expanding ever since.

Mickey said he started investing in the birds as a supplement to his retirement, but now the business has almost "gotten out of hand."

The operation includes custom hatching, boarding, hauling, and brokerage.

Doak said he was in the grocery business for several years before he quit and went into the insurance business. He mainly wrote insurance policies for ostriches, and that was when he found out about the financial incentives of the industry.

He and his father bought their first ostriches almost four years ago, purchasing two birds that were only six months old, then sold them four months later at a substantial profit. They were hooked.

In the beginning, the two boarded their birds with other ostrich ranchers. Now their operation houses 30 birds, some of their own and some boarded for others, and there is room for more. Also, they are building additional pens and want to build a brooder barn soon.

Mickey said his son handles the hauling and brokerage aspects of the business now. He uses a computer to keep up with available birds for breeding and to match birds with interested buyers.

The Porters said the main area of loss in the business comes when the animals die.

The number one killer is related to management of the grounds on which the ostriches are kept, according to Doak. He said the birds will eat anything — sticks, glass, wire, nails.

"We can't leave anything laying around," Mickey said. The men said they also have to be careful not to leave any gaps in the fencing or between the fence and structures where a bird could get its head stuck and "pull its head off."

"They're not real smart," Doak said. "We have to treat them a lot like kids."

Doak said the birds also can be very destructive, having a powerful kick that can deliver a force of 400 pounds per square inch. He said they also use a hardened "plate" in the center of their chests to hammer on objects or each other.

"They can kill you," Doak said. "Their big toe can penetrate a car door. They are unbelievably strong."

For all their strength, ostriches live on very low rations compared with cattle or other livestock.

Mickey said he gives them three pounds of feed per day for each breeding pair. When two birds are selected as breeding mates they are kept penned separately from other birds to prevent fighting among the males.

The Porters have a male named "Red" who is extremely aggressive.

"He will come after us," Doak said.

Handling the animals is made easier by the use of ostrich hooks, similar to a shepherd's crook. Doak said the hook is used to catch a bird by the neck, but care has to be used to prevent neck injuries.

Doak said the handler will place a hood over his hand, then catch the bird's beak and slip the hood over the bird's head. The hood covers the bird's eyes so that it cannot see the handlers approaching, and it usually has a calming effect. They then push the ostrich in the direction they want it to go. Even then, the birds will sometimes sit down.

The Porters currently have five breeder pairs, and have an incubator. An incubator barn is almost ready for occupancy that will eventually quadruple their capacity for eggs.

The laying season for ostriches is usually from about April to late summer and the females start laying when they are about three years old. However, the Porters have a two-year-old female who delivered her first egg March 7.

Doak said the viability average for eggs is 50%—half of all eggs laid will eventually hatch, although some breeding pairs will have a much higher percentage. The gestation period is 42 days.

When the birds hatch they are about the size of a full-grown quail or larger. They reach their full-grown bone structure and height by the age of 12 to 14 months.



FEATHER DANCING—This male ostrich spreads his feathers and dances in an effort to impress his mate and scare off interlopers at the same time.

Photo By Linda Maxwell

Breeding is still the name of the game for the ostrich industry in the US, according to the Porters. Doak said when they first started, people were saying it would be five to seven years before the industry would reach the level of production to go into a slaughter industry. He said people are still saying it will be five to seven years.

Doak said that any birds they get that are unsuitable for breeding would be sold for slaughter. The main products from the slaughtered birds include the hides, feathers, and meat.

The hides are used for leather products such as boots. The feathers are in demand by General Motors for special dusters on the assembly line that cut down on static electricity and remove dust before a new car is painted. The meat is in great demand by Europeans.

Eggs that do not hatch also have alternate uses, mostly as decorative items.

Doak said the investment potential is very attractive in the industry, but there is still some risk.

Of course, they have insurance on all of their older birds, especially the breeding stock. Three-month old birds may sell for \$5,500 to \$6,500. In the six-month age range, birds may cost as much as \$7,500 to \$9,500. At one year, the value may jump to \$10,500 to \$18,000. A two-year-old could cost as much as \$20,000 to \$32,500. Proven breeders are priced anywhere from \$35,000 to \$80,000.

"Three to five breeder pair laying as many as 30 eggs each could bring in as much as \$150,000 a year, not counting expenses," Doak said.

Mickey pointed out that the ostrich industry is not as land intensive as the cattle industry. Their operation is situated on only 31 acres.

"You couldn't run very many cattle on that," he said.



THIS SIGN greets visitors along the driveway to the Porter Ranch, although visitors are discouraged from calling during the breeding season—from now through late summer.

Photo By Linda Maxwell



NEST EGG—Mickey Porter (left) and his son, Doak, are holding a basket containing an egg that was laid recently by a two-year-old female ostrich on their ostrich ranch south of Hereford in Castro County.

Photo By Linda Maxwell

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Research to enhance ratite industry suffers from lack of birds

By STEVE HILL
A&M Extension Journalist

COLLEGE STATION — When it comes to funding research on ostriches, emus and rheas, not a problem says Texas A&M's Chris Bailey, associate professor and poultry specialist at Texas A&M.

But when it comes to getting birds to use in research, therein lies the rub he says.

One research project being underwritten by the industry is on holds, not able to get started last year because no birds became available to the research team.

But that is understandable to a Texas A&M scientist researching incubation and nutrition of ratites, or flightless birds without breastbones.

The fledgling ratite industry is in a Catch-22 situation — it needs more scientific knowledge but birds are hard to come by.

"The birds are worth as much that people don't want to give them to a university," Bailey said in an interview about three years ago. And, since that interview, things have not changed much, he admits.

"They don't even want to give up the eggs, which can

be worth up to \$1,000," he said. "We want to help and will, but we need help, too."

Bailey and Dr. Roy Fanguy, also an associate poultry science professor at Texas A&M, are principal investigators for a team that has several research goals.

Those include finding which nutrients

best enhance ostrich reproduction and growth, determining how shell thickness and porosity effect hatchability and survivability of chicks, and ascertaining whether wire-cage flooring is preferable to packed-earth flooring for raising juvenile ostriches.

The team, formed in the fall, planned to focus primarily on ostriches, but so far has only a pair of emus and a few emu eggs to study.

Ostriches, emus and rheas are all similar in some respects with long necks and large bodies atop long, thin legs — but vary in size and a few other characteristics.

Rheas might grow to 5-1/2 feet and 55 pounds, while emus might be slightly taller and weigh 120 pounds. Ostriches, the largest birds, can attain heights of almost 10 feet and weights of 330 pounds.

The birds provide meat,

feathers and hides, and in the case of the emu, oil that can be used in cosmetics.

The Texas A&M scientists advertised in The Ostrich News asking for donations of birds to do research funded in part by the

Ratite Research Foundation egg. The Foundation, based in Lawton,

recently donated \$15,000 to the university's department of poultry science.

Reaction to the ad was immediate but not what Bailey sought.

"Our load of phone calls doubled with people asking for any help we can give. What we always tell them is that they have any extra eggs to please give them to us," he said

However, the team has no ostriches and only five ostrich eggs to study. That's a long way from the two breeding groups (a total of

two males and four females) they need to get started.

The eggs come from Texas A&M's College of Veterinary Medicine, where a different group has four adult ostriches being studied for their reactions to veterinary medicine."

A female ostrich might produce 60 eggs in an average breeding season, which lasts from late spring to early fall. However, hatchability problems and high mortality rates in the first few months of chicks' lives plague the ostrich industry.

The birds often develop leg or foot problems that can cause death because of their heavy body weight in proportion to leg size.

The two emus Bailey and Fanguy have were donated by Franklin rancher Stan Weiner, one of the few willing to give up birds for study.

"You've got to be dedicated. People are just going to have to realize they need to put up animals," Weiner explained.

For now, that allows the team to study the breeding period of emus, from late fall to early spring — exactly opposite that of ostriches. The team hopes to check the effect of light, temperature and humidity on emu breeding and eventually find how to extend the breeding period and make them lay more eggs.

"To make these birds really pay off in the long run, to have year-round product production. We've got to find the trigger," Fanguy said.

The scientists would love to begin finding out why ostrich egg shells in the United States seem much thinner than those in South Africa. Bailey speculated it was because of too much calcium in U.S. feeds

They also hope to assess amino acid requirements in juvenile ostriches and evaluate the impact of vitamin B and other vitamins and nutrients on health of young ostriches.

But that's difficult' without eggs and birds. John Crawford, Ratite

Research Foundation managing director, said getting products to put their See RESEARCH, Pg 11

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Time: 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
Registration Opens at 7:00 A.M.
Reception: Immediately Following the Conclusion of the Seminar
(Note: Seminar Attendees get reserved seats for Auction on Saturday and Sunday, May 14 & 15, 1994)
SEMINAR SPEAKERS
GARY DEERER Attorney "Contracts"
DR.s JIM ROBINSON, JIM OLSON, Ph.D. Texas A&M Dept. of Entomology "Black Flies and Buffalo Gnats"
DR.s LESLIE THOMPSON, LINDA HOOVER, JINGER EBERSBACHER, Ph.D. Texas Tech University "Emu Meat Study Phase I, Emu Meat Study Phase 2, Emu Leather Study"
TOMMY ENGELKE Assoc. V.P. of Texas Ag. Co-Op Council "Why Co-ops?"
DR. BENNY GALLAWAY, Ph.D. LGL Ecological Genetics, Inc. "Genetics"
BETTYE ODLE Pres. Of Texas Emu Association. "What To Look For When Buying Emus"
DOUG ATKINSON Emu Rancher, Trainer for Dallas Mavericks "Use of Emu Oil as Sports Therapy"
R.K. WILSON III The Tyler Exotic Dome L.L.C. "How To Buy In An Auction"
Registration Form
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 I plan to buy or sell birds while I am here
(Note: Mention this event to get special rates at the Sheraton Hotel-Tyler 903-561-5800)

World War I vet brings 'Flanders Fields' to Texas

GEORGETOWN (AP) — Thanks to a World War I veteran who had a magic touch with seeds, there's a touch of Flanders fields in Texas. Georgetown is the official "Red Poppy Capital of Texas," and it got that way

because Henry Purl "Okra" Compton brought back some red corn poppy seeds from France after the war and sprinkled them in his mother's garden. "In Flanders fields the poppies blow, Between the crosses, row

on row..." So went the famous lines recalled the first ostrich seminar at Texas A&M — held in 1989 — and said much of the scientific data presented came from studies in Africa's Kalahari Desert in the 1910s. It is an established ratite industry, but South Africa has a been "Very tight-lipped" about sharing information,

he still managed to capture an enemy soldier), brought the seeds back as mementoes. The poppies blew, and just grew and grew, spreading along roadways, the railroad tracks, along College Street, from 8th Street

to San Gabriel Park. Every year they would spring up in new spots. As far as anyone knew, Georgetown was the only place in the country where these poppies made a permanent home, reseeding themselves year after year.

For Compton, history was repeating itself. As a boy, he had planted his father's cotton fields in okra and started an okra plague that covered the county for years. "I didn't join to fight," he said later of his decision.

From Page 10

bucks where their beaks are won't be easy.

Ostrich or emu chicks often sell for \$1,500 each, he said. Yearling ostriches might go for \$5,000 and a good, breeding pair of ostriches might cost \$40,000.

In addition, Crawford said, the ratite market is still a breeders market instead of a slaughter market.

That means those in the market still are trying to build up herds of retirees, rather than producing the large numbers of birds needed to support a processing industry.

Potential processors need 100,000 ratites a year for slaughter in order to justify building a facility, Crawford said. But according to a 1990 Survey by The Ostrich News, the total number of birds older than 90 days among commercial producers was 20,740 ostriches, 12,830 emus and 4,960 rheas.

Some sources place today's breeding ostrich population at near 35,000 pair.

It could take from five to seven years before ostrich and emu stocks are built up enough to supply 100,000 birds annually, and rhea herds will take even longer, Crawford said.

The foundation has received several commitments for birds and eggs, but none have come through yet, he said.

"It's frustrating," he said. "We still don't even know how to ask for these things that well. And even if we got them, we're not sure how to get an egg from Oregon to Texas, for instance."

Meanwhile, Bailey and other researchers make do. In addition to the ratite foundation money, they have a commitment for matching funds from the Texas Department of Agriculture, but probably couldn't afford even a single breeding pair of ostriches.

There is only minimal lit-

erature on ratites, and most is old information. Crawford recalled the first ostrich seminar at Texas A&M — held in 1989 — and said much of the scientific data presented came from studies in Africa's Kalahari Desert in the 1910s. It is an established ratite industry, but South Africa has a been "Very tight-lipped" about sharing information,

Crawford said.

Still, he added, American breeders may have surpassed South Africa in the ability to raise ostriches to maturity. About 17 percent of South African ostrich eggs produce birds that reach slaughter age, or about 14 months, he said. "From talking to them, I get the impression that we already are ahead of the South

Africans," he said.

Meanwhile, the foundation and The Ostrich News will do what they can to support research.

Establishing good research herds may take

three four years, Crawford said in that interview three years ago.

"We're really just starting from scratch" Fanguy added.



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WT seminars continue

A joint agriculture seminar program which began in the fall will continue this semester. The seminars are sponsored by West Texas A&M University's Division of Agriculture and the USDA-Agricultural Research Service at Bushland, Texas Agriculture Experiment Station and the Texas Agriculture Extension Service.

The next seminar will be at 3 p.m. Friday, March 25 in the auditorium of the Texas A&M University Research and Extension Center, 6500 Amarillo Boulevard West in Amarillo. Dr. Noland Clark, director of the USDA-ARS at Bushland, will speak on "Wind Energy for Pumping Water for Livestock."

The seminars are free and open to the public. Refreshments are served prior to each seminar at 2:45 p.m. Additional seminars are

scheduled for April 22 and May 6. For more information contact the WTAMU Division of Agriculture at (806) 656-2550.

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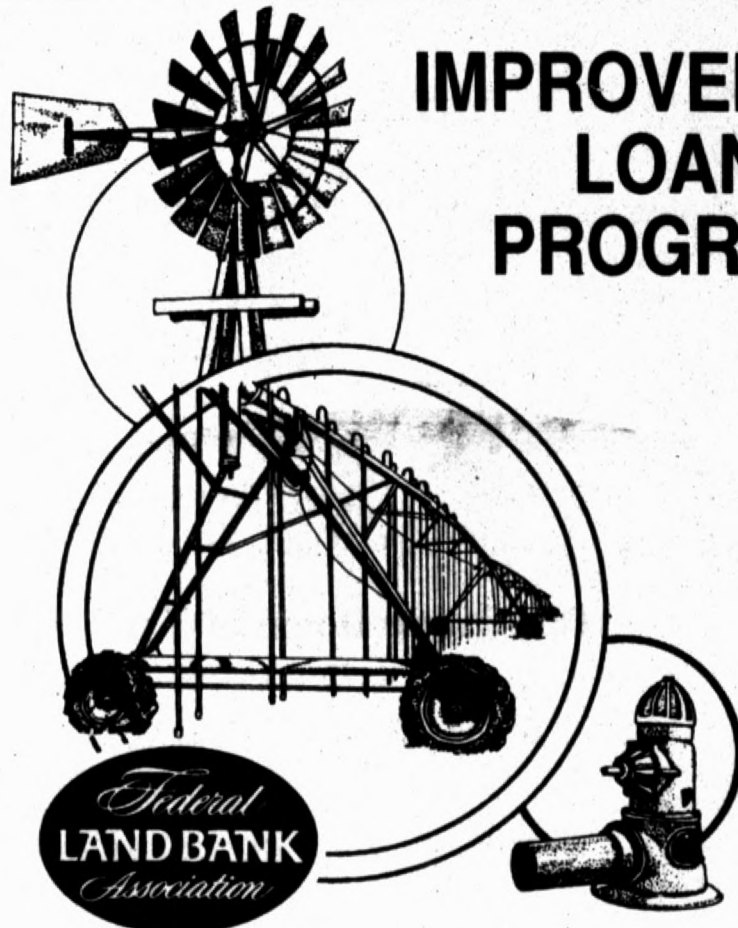
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AgReview

By GORDON ZEIGLER
AgReview Writer

KRESS — Ed Rogers pursues the insurance business by trade and enjoys producing club lambs by avocation.

His livestock credentials include breeding lambs and serving as longtime Kress Stock Show superintendent — two things he's enjoyed doing for years.

Now, after spending lots of time in the traditional ag industry, he's taking his animal husbandry interests down a new, more uncharted road — into ostriches.

He'll continue with lambs, he says, but the ostriches are definitely taking up lots of his time for him and his wife, Barbara, these days.

And that's especially true this month. Any day now, with the approach of spring, the females will enter the laying season.

The perennial Kress High School booster that he is, Rogers decided to name his ranch "Black Gold".

Besides being an apt name for his ranch — it took on special meaning in Kangaroo country with KHS colors colors being black and gold — it was also a logical choice.

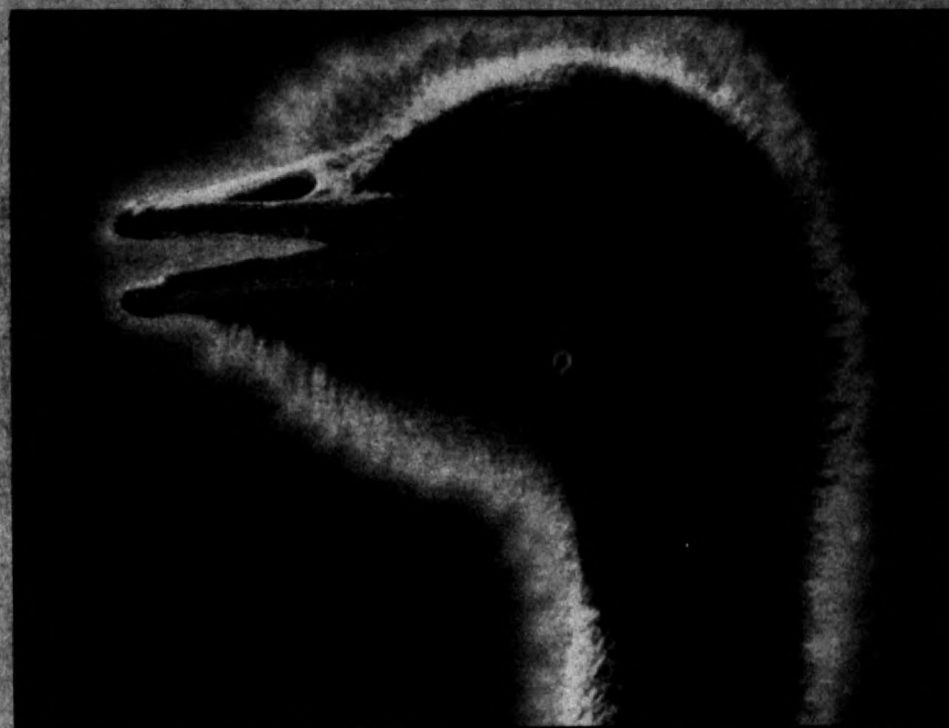
The striking birds fit the farm's name, owing to the natural black coloring of the mature males and the golden brown hues of the females.

"This is going to be our first year for most of our birds to lay," Mrs. Rogers said proudly.

The goal will be to hatch eggs and raise the birds until they are yearlings, then sell them.

Flightless birds and exotic animals fill new livestock niche for resourceful families intent on business diversity and making a profit...

A face many have learned to love...



Courtesy Photo/Bluebonnet Feeds, Ardmore, Okla.

Whether it is the face of an ostrich, emu, rhea or another exotic specie, these animals are capturing the attention, and sometimes even the hearts, of Texans who are raising them for profit. Exotic animals are the hottest new ag endeavor of the 1990s.

"Ed purchased four first ostriches from a friend who had raised them but didn't want to build a hatchery," she explained.

Still enjoying the newness of their business, Ed and Barbara apparently are typical of many recent entries into the business of ostriches.

The Rogers have much in common with others who have become well versed in this new ag-related field:

Melvin Carroll, lifelong cotton producer in Brownfield, got into ostriches five years ago.

Having good luck with his first birds, Carroll said he added emus to his flock since it gives him year round production. Since their laying cycles follow one another, the ostriches lay, then the emus begin their cycle.

"I finish out one season, then start the next, we're always busy" says Carroll, who is immediate past president of Zone 6 of the Texas Emu Association.

Aside from these new entries, the Texas Panhandle also lays claim to what may be one of the oldest ostrich operations in Texas — Quail Ostrich Farm in Quail near Shamrock.

Don and Bonnie Hall got into ostriches 17 years ago, well ahead of the current popularity. A wildlife reserve near Lelia Lake gave them two chicks for helping hatch out eggs. Hall, then into traditional poultry, got into the business and it has grown steadily.

Don's community involvement in Quail has led him to donate a pair of ostriches to be raffled off to raise funds for the local volunteer fire department this spring.

Llamas drew the interest of Plainview attorney Ed Self several years ago. An avid backpacker and wilderness

See EXOTICS, Page 14

A Life Style

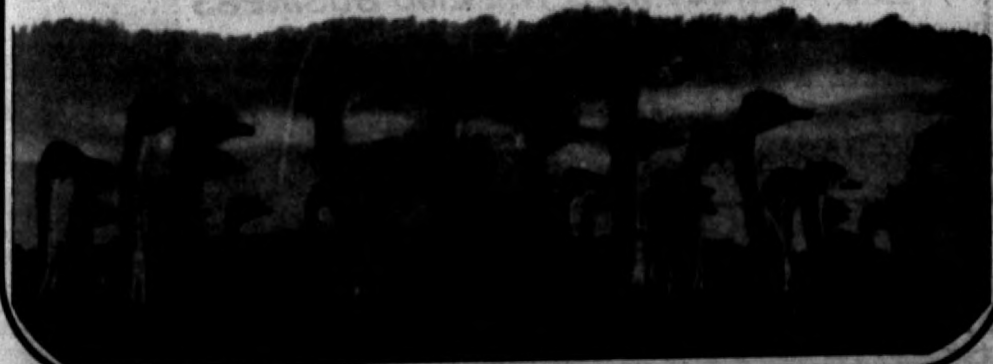
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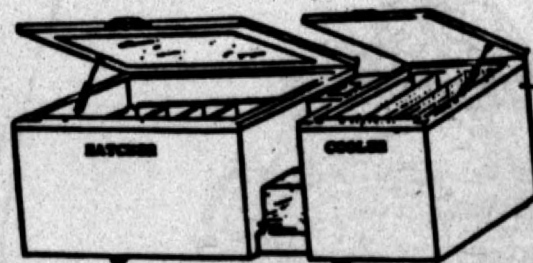
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EXOTICS, from Page 13

camper, Self became interested in owning llamas for use as pack animals. Now he has become a dedicated breeder of that exotic animal, maintaining a breeding herd and following the llama show circuit.

Larry Golden, owner of Golden's Point farm near Aiken in Floyd County, has raised llamas for several years. Grace, a 7-month old progeny of his well-known sire Jazz was Grand Champion at both the Tulsa, Okla., and Albuquerque, N.M. state fairs in 1993.

Just across the New Mexico border in Tucumcari, ex-Air Force pilot and Desert Storm veteran Greg Donald of Diamond D Ranch is in his first year of business — which rests on the producing prowess of his brood male "J.R." and two females.

Donald says he entered ostrich business in his home state of Florida after his father suggested it as a good post-service business venture. He then moved to New Mexico because the dry climate is better for hatching healthy chicks. And, he says he likes his newfound business because, unlike Air Force flying, it keeps him home with his son and wife most of the time.

The young rancher says he intends to build his business on "honesty and hard work" and backed that up recently by replacing a chick free of charge after one of his first customers lost a bird.

He's involved with fellow ostrich and emu raisers in Quay County, N.M., in trying to develop his area as a hub of the industry. The recently hosted the city's industrial and civic boosters for a special fajita barbecue featuring ostrich — a public event promoting ostrich meat.

Richard Lee, owner of Walk About Creed Ostriches in Taloga, Okla., was a ranch employee just about four years ago, when he purchased his first birds. During an interview at the recent Southwest Ostrich Breeders Association meeting in Amarillo, Lee claims his business has met with enough success that he plans to expand from a two-acre tract to 300 acres in the near future.

Lee points with pride to the fact his high school-age daughter won the Star Greenhand Award in FFA, and that her projects were based on her experience caring for some of the family's ostriches.

Another Southwest Oklahoma Rancher, R.L. "Bob" Gore of Camargo says ostriches have been extremely good for his cattle ranch, on the same land he grew up on.

Ostriches do well on his 4,000-acre ranch, where during some profitable years of bird breeding he has been able to abandoned farming operations and put some native pasture grass in its place — thanks mostly to his success in ostrich breeding, he says. The grass has allowed him to increase the load on his land, he says, and the ostrich side of his business has become a respectable

revenue producer.

So, the Rogers are following in the footsteps of many like themselves.

As their business continues to develop and they enter a fraternity that has drawn fellowTexans, they continue to discover many joys of ostrich raising.

"We've had lots of children, from different classes from different towns, who have stopped out here to see the birds," commented Mrs. Rogers. "Now we can't have them come out, since it is breeding season."

Black Gold Ostrich farm located just east of Kress on Texas 145. After laying begins, no visitors will be allowed. The slightest upset can cause ostriches to stop laying.

Another precaution taken at the farm was planting of windbreak trees in front of the 60 by 200-foot-pens to block road noise.

The birds include Blue Necks and Black Israels, ranging in age from 18 months to 7 years. The older birds had been laying for several years before the Rogers acquired them. The young birds will be laying for the first time.

"We hope to expand to numerous layers in the future," Mrs. Rogers said.

So, in the critical weeks ahead, when it's best that ostriches are focused on the serious business of laying eggs, the Rogers will be busy logging in each new egg on a computer and placing each in an incubator.

"You definitely have to rely on a the computer," she said. "Each egg is documented. We keep track of which hen the egg came from, the hatch time. This begins a record on all birds."

Record keeping, done on computer, begins a process that will follow the chick the rest of its life.

The reason that activity on the farm has reached such a frenzy this year is because the Rogers are preparing to enter their very first hatching season.

They obtained their first pair from friends, a retired

couple that did not want to go to the trouble to install a hatchery to serve their breeding pair. The Rogers have built their flock since then, and their new hatchery was installed in early March.

Ostriches start laying eggs in March and continue through October. An ostrich can lay as many as 30 eggs or more. Birds lay every other day. Depending on their productivity, hens can lay as many as 70 to 100 eggs, Mrs. Rogers said.

Ostriches require some extra special care at times, the Rogers have learned. This ranges from supplying a diet supplemented with fresh Alfalfa — which they finally located in the Clarendon area — to regular searches of the ostrich pens with magnets to rid their environment of wire and other materials the ostriches could injure themselves with if swallowed.

In recent months the Rogers have worked hard to improve the surroundings for their growing ostrich spread.

An interesting thing they've learned is that the hardy birds will not stay in a shelter in cold weather. They go inside to get food, then come right back out, even in a blizzard.

Their ostriches are being colonized in the natural way — grouping about two males and 3 or 4 females.

The Rogers continue their interest in boosting Kress youngsters, although their own children are grown.

Their son Mark of Kress and Tonda Jolly of Claytonville both showed animals in Kress during their high school years. And, they might even be showing ostriches if they had come along at the present time.

The Rogers farm continues to attract the interest of the local citizenry, and the couple notes there is no age limit on interest when it comes to big bird watching.

"It's funny how much of a novelty the birds are," Mrs. Rogers added. "The kids just love them. And, we also have a lot of adults who have to come out daily and sit on the road and watch."

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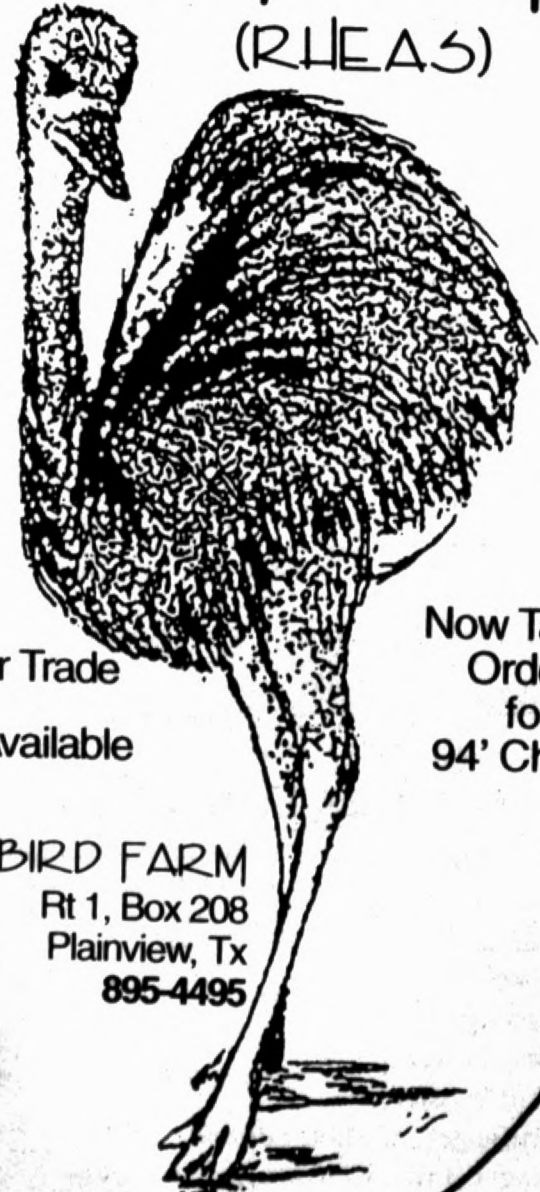


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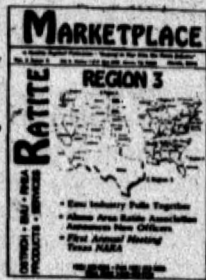
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The Ratite Marketplace, owned by Judy and Lynn Morgan and edited by Joe Haid, is only four years old and is published every two weeks. It hits 13,000 subscribers around the world and its voluminous issues top 300 pages in size.

In its four year history, the publication has seen its size and circulation grow way beyond its publishers' expectations.

Twice a week, the newspaper is circulated to 13,000 subscribers in the U.S., Canada, Europe and elsewhere. It now has separate editions targeted to five different regions of the country.

"We are the largest in the world," explained Mrs. Morgan.

The publication was launched after a local ostrich rancher suggested there was a need for such a publication to serve the industry.

Since Texas is said to have more ostrich ranches than any other state, locating an industry publication such as Ratite Marketplace here made a lot of sense.

Giving Texas even more credibility as a leader was the establishment by The American Ostrich Association of its headquarters in Fort Worth. The National Emu Association has since located its offices in Dallas.

The Morgans, then publishing the Montague County Shopper, decided to take the plunge and entered the industry with an initial 16-page publication. After growing steadily, it now is devoted to thousands of inches of advertising plus informative articles concerning all aspects of the exotic bird and animal industry.

"Randy Reeves, a local ostrich raiser and owner of Breezy Hill ostrich meat company, was the instigator," explained Mrs. Morgan. "He just thought there was a need for a more frequently published periodically pertaining to ostrich raisers.

The publication has widened its appeal somewhat since its inception.

Now, it focuses on ostriches as well as emus and rheas (all members of the same Ratite family), plus it has expanded to exotic animals including llamas. In today's market, ostrich raisers are diversifying into other animals.

Many advertisements help link buyers and sellers of the birds.

"Many of our ranchers are raising both Ratites and exotics," explained the publisher.

The latest rage in exotic animals is raising hedgehogs, and the Ratite Marketplace recently published a separate issue devoted strictly to the hedgehog market, and it totaled more than 60 pages.

"Right now, the big thing is exotic pets," Ms. Morgan explained. "The hedgehog is getting hot . . . and others like the sugar glider, bush babies and wallabies. There is also big interest in miniature donkeys, zebras, pot-bellied pigs and llamas."

Advertisements in the Marketplace range from specialty services like ostrich hauling to sale of equipment like incubators, hatchers, legbands, identification microchips.

"The list goes on and on," explains Mrs. Morgan. "Mainly, the ostrich market is a breeders market right now. The advertisers are appealing to that."

To stay tuned into the industry, the Morgans take their publication on the road to trade shows. They attended the annual American Ostrich Association Convention in late February in San Diego, an event that drew more than 2,000 convention-goers and more than 200 exhibitors.

This year's focus was a continued emphasis on all facets of production of chicks for the breeding market.

"Their ultimate goal is the slaughter mar-

ket, but until enough birds are available, that is not going to happen for several years down the line," Mrs. Morgan explained.

The Ratite Marketplace will also attend the convention of the American Emu Association in Nashville in early August.

Emus, a cousin of the ostrich, are becoming more popular. There is currently a growing demand from the cosmetic industry for U.S. birds to provide a sought-after oil produced by a oil gland. American growers would ultimately compete with Australia,

which has a well developed ostrich and emu industry.

A second major specialty publication of the Bowie firm is the Antique Trader.

Subscriptions to Ratite Marketplace are available for \$30 per year for 26 issues in the continental United States. The publication's phone number is 1-800-972-7730. They accept both Visa and Mastercard. Mailing address is PO Box 1613, Bowie, TX, 76230.

Insurance now available for small-acre farms, including exotic bird operations

AUSTIN — Texans with emu and ostrich operations and other small acreage farms and ranches will find it easier to insure them in the future.

Insurance Commissioner J. Robert Hunter recently removed a 10-acre restriction on operations that can qualify for a farm and ranch owner's policy.

A farm and ranch owners policy — unlike a normal homeowners policy — allows a rural resident to insure more than a home and its contents. The resident can add barns, equipment, feed and livestock to the policy to protect them against loss from certain perils, such as fire, lightning and vandalism.

In the past, ranchers and farmers were unable to qualify for such policies if they owned less than 10 acres of land. They had to buy multiple policies — in some cases, one for their homes, another for

farm buildings and equipment and a third for feed and livestock — or endure gaps in coverage. Now, one farm and ranch owners policy will insure everything.

"The acreage requirement clearly prevented some farmers and ranchers from buying the insurance they needed," Hunter said. It was unnecessary, and we dropped it. That's one way you make government work for the people of Texas."

The new rule eliminates any reference to a 10-acre minimum. That minimum has been especially troublesome for emu and ostrich ranchers with tiny operations but valuable facilities, equipment and livestock to insure.

Continental Insurance, which sells farm and ranch policies in 32 states, initiated the hearing by asking that the requirement at least be reduced to three acres. Dudley Lloyd, with Continental's Dallas regional office, said that more of the Texas emu and ostrich farmers and ranchers seeking coverage from his company did not qualify because of the 10-acre minimum.

Lyndon Anderson, TDI associate commissioner for property and casualty, said, "There are, in fact, farming and ranching operations that are successful on less than 10 acres, and we really see no reason to have an acreage requirement at all."

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Publication helps bird industry sell wares

BOWIE — One of the newer entries into the field of exotic bird publications is The Ratite Trader, which inaugurated its bi-weekly product in 1993.

"We have articles on ostriches, emus and rheas, plus a household cookign column that helps the housewife learn how to prepare the meat," explained June Brown.

Toni Gardner, editor and publisher of the publication, introduced the newspaper to provide a mixture of informative articles and attractive classified and display advertising in which goods and services are made available to the ostrich industry.

Regular articles are authored by veterinarians specializing in ratite



treatment and other experts in their field.

"There is lots of good information," explained Ms. Brown.

Ms. Brown, who handles classified advertising for the publication, said Bowie was a natural location for such a newspaper since there is such a heavy concentration of ostrich ranches in the vicinity of Montague County, in a predominately farming and ranching region 60 miles northwest of Fort Worth and halfway between Fort Worth and Wichita Falls.

"This is a good area for ratites," she said. "There are a lot of people raising them here in this area. We are mainly farming and ranching and ostriches fit in excellently with that."

Advertising offerings in publication like the Ratite Trader run the gamut of ratite supplies and services.

"We are still in a breeders' market for breeding birds, and you find

mostly that type of interest," she said. "Then you have those products and services that go along with it — specialized fencing wire, incubators, specialty rations."

Fence material is a big item in ongoing advertising.

"You cannot contain ostriches like you can a cow or a horse," she explained. "And, humidity is very important."

Another specialty advertisement popular in Ratite Trader is the listing of real estate — much of it offering for sale ostrich ranches and retirement property in numerous states.

Subscriptions to the Ratite Trader, which ranges in size from 88 to 112 pages and publishes about 5,000 copies per issue, can be obtained at \$20 per year for third class mailings or \$48 for first class by calling 1-800-500-2473 or by writing PO Box 1247, Bowie, TX, 76230.

A&M completes one of first U.S. studies of ostrich meat

COLLEGE STATION — Texas A&M is about to publish one of its first studies ever comparing ostrich with beef and other common meats.

"This was the first study, so far as we know, in the U.S. related to the slaughter and processing of ostrich," explained Dr. Jim Keeton, Professor of Meat Science at A&M.

Initial indications of the study bode well for the exotic meat product, which was accepted in consumer research as a near match for beef.

The first reporting was last year at the 1993 feb convention. We did another update at San Diego in which we reported on consumer acceptability data and new product development data.

"In terms of steaks and things like that, not much difference in that and a top loin steak from beef, in both appearance and acceptability," Keeton said. "There is quite a bit of similarity."

The study was funded by the American Ostrich Association, and its preliminary findings were reported at the group's 1993 annual meeting in Las Vegas.

We did a study for AOA, taking carcass data, nutrition on a profile on the muscles in order to determine nutritive data, product development of ostrich sausage and ham and information related to these three areas.

A follow up was given at the AOA convention in February in San Diego, Keeton said.

"The AOA arranged for donation of birds, we used about 20 in all," Keeton said. The birds were shipped to A&M from ostrich farms as far away as Indiana and California as well as Texas, he said.

Kelly Flynn of the AOA helped coordinate the study and reporting of data. Results will now be published in several professional and academic journals by A&M researchers.

Ostrich meat is at its optimum when cooked to medium done, Keeton said.

Some of the nation's larger ostrich raisers, who may figure in the future commercial meat market, were especially interested in results, A&M found.

"I personally think markets in the U.S. will be such niche markets as specialty shops, such as delicatessans where specialty meats are sold," Keeton said.

Keeton said there are currents in the industry leading toward future development of ostrich slaughtering. Some people are actually gearing up to slaughter the birds in government inspected plants," he said.

Texas restaurants including the Huntington and Galleria in the Dallas area have led the wave of establishments pushing the ostrich meat on their menus.

In working with sausage, Keeton said researchers learned it seemed necessary to use fat from other meat than ostrich.

"For some reason, we don't know why, the ostrich fat didn't seem as desirable as pork fat," he said.

Hatches plan to raise ostrich part time

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

By day, David Ray assembles air intakes for F-16 fighters. In the evening, the Fort Worth resident tends a flock of ostriches.

"It's because I'm 46 years old and the jobs at Lockheed aren't going to last forever," he said. Ray is among thousands of Americans who believe that the ostrich has a dynamic future in the U.S. agricultural economy, perhaps even displacing some familiar barnyard faces.

"There's a real chance that the ostrich will one day replace the cow," Ray said evenly. "Its meat has less cholesterol than even turkey. Everything on it is viable. You know how much a pair of ostrich boots cost?"

Ray paid \$5,000 three years ago for his first ostrich couple, which produced 54 eggs during the last breeding year ending in September. Since November, there have

been 24 eggs, of which 16 have been sold. The eggs fetch \$1,000 apiece.

"It's paid for everything, and I've made a little money," said Ray, who has built an incubator house and a 60-by-170-foot fenced enclosure. "I've put all of it back into business." There have been setbacks and on-the-job learning.

"When I went in, I didn't even know which end the ostrich ate out of," said Ray, whose first batch of 12 eggs produced 11 viable chicks but whose "last nine chicks died of different things."

"I don't think it will go the way of the potbellied pig or the llama, because there's no world market for those," Ray said of predictions that the ostrich market might fade.

Friends, he said, thought he was crazy to go into ostriches; now "They want in on the action."

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Hereford man is ostrich pioneer; predicts a bright future for the industry

By **GEORGIA TYLER**
The Hereford Brand

Breeding and raising ostriches is an industry that still is in its infancy . . . all those full-quill ostrich boots still are made from imported skins.

Ken Rogers, who has been in the business of breeding ostriches for about three years, believes the availability of ostrich meat and skin will begin to meet part of the demand in another year or two.

"The demand is there, now," said Rogers, one of the pioneers in raising ostriches in Deaf Smith County.

He and his partners have about 100, with 15 to 20 pairs of breeding birds, right now. Several other operators have a lesser number.

Raising ostriches can be a labor intensive business when the hens start laying eggs — Rogers said two hens at his place already are laying eggs — because of the care required. And, the laying season may extend well into fall.

The eggs are picked up from the pens and placed in incubators. Rogers' wife, Lucy, is the substitute mother for the chicks.

For 42 days, she weighs and candles each egg regularly, keeping records. When hatching time nears, she watches very closely and if the chick seems to be having trouble breaking through the shell, a gentle tap by Mrs. Rogers helps out.

At hatching, a chick may weigh from 1 3/4 pounds to 2 1/2 pounds, said Mrs. Rogers. During the first six months of life, the bird can grow a foot per month.

The hatchlings require special care. Mrs. Rogers feeds the birds by inserting a tube down the throat and forcing food through a syringe to the stomach.

By the time an ostrich reaches adulthood, the bird may be eight feet tall and weigh 400 pounds.

And, the strength of the ostrich, while sounding like legend, is indeed fact. Rogers said the ostrich does have a kick equal to a mule,



By **PHIL HAMILTON**

CURIOS — Ostrich checks out tourists observing it on Rotary Exchange trip to South Africa.

as many have claimed.

But, the ostrich can outrun other animals, eating up territory in 12-foot steps and traveling 40 to 50 miles per hours, Rogers added.

Still, the bird is fragile with long spindly legs and equally long neck. Rogers said the ostrich does not show an abundance of intelligence, though. After all, the head is very small, in comparison with other animals of similar size.

Since starting the ostrich business, Ken and Lucy Rogers have added a metal

building to their place north of Hereford, for ostrich pens. New equipment is installed as it is needed.

Demand for ostrich meat, Rogers believes, will only grow because of the nutritional value. A three-ounce serving is low in calories, 96.9, compared to turkey, 135; lean beefsteak, 240, and pork, 275.

Cholesterol-minded consumers will be interested to know that a three-ounce serving has 58 mg. Only turkey, 59 mg., is near that low figure. Chicken, beef and lamb are in the 70s and pork is in the 80s.

Ostrich-raising in the U.S. has come a long way since early attempts more than 75 years ago. When ostrich plume hats went the way of all fashion fads, there wasn't much demand for the big bird.

The growth of the industry in the last few years has given rise to optimism about the future. Research into disease and nutrition is beginning in several major universities.

Since a female ostrich may produce up to 70 eggs per year, the perception is that raising ostriches should be a simple matter.

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Firm that broke the ice slaughtering ostrich in Texas on its way to being farmer-owned Co-Op

By GORDON ZEIGLER
AgReview Writer

BOWIE — To prove its serious intentions to stimulate the ostrich slaughter market in the United States, a Texas meat company dealing in ostrich for several years has announced its evolution to a farmer-owned cooperative.

It will be dedicated to accelerating its own production of ostrich from about 100 birds last year to, hopefully, more than 500 in 1994, according to Galynn Burrus, spokesman for the firm.

Arrangements for the transition are currently under way, she said, with more details to be available in the near future.

"More and more ostrich breeders and ranchers are aiding the growth of the U.S. commercial market, by culling out their less than perfect ostrich for slaughter," she said.

She said efforts by Breezy Hill and others show that the commercial market in the U.S. is already a proven one. "It is a still growing market," she said, "But it is nonetheless commercial."

Her sales figures show volume increasing steadily over the past six months.

"What was 50/50 sales to restaurants versus mail order is now 65 percent to restaurants and 35 percent to mail order," she reported the first week in March.

Randy Reeves, founder of the firm an ostrich breeder himself, has sought to find a way to overcome the supply obstacle for ostrich meat, largely by offering \$1,000 a bird for so-called cull or commercial grade ostrich [as opposed to breeders].

"What's exciting is that are actually the only established firm marketing ostrich meat on a regular basis in the United States." Reeves' formula is simple.

He buys up suitable ostriches anywhere he can find them in Texas Oklahoma and New Mexico. He offers \$4 per pound live weight (which figures out somewhere around \$1,000). Most of these candidates have been injured or have undesirable qualities like a club foot or other conditions shunned by breeders.

That \$1,000 animal is later processed out yielding 100 pounds of boneless ostrich cuts, which are resold for around \$30 per pound wholesale—yielding as much as \$2,000 profit. And, sale of valued ostrich skins for leather boots adds

even more to the bottom line. Reeves has his birds processed by John Hernandez at Caprock Meat Company in Floydada.

Then he markets it through Breezy Hill Meat. To his knowledge, he was the first in the country to begin regular mail order ostrich meat sales and sales to Texas restaurants.

Besides catering to specialty restaurants, Reeves sells about half his supply to mail order customers who phone in.

"We stay mostly sold out," said the sales manager at Breezy Hill. "Our most popular item is boneless, filet steaks." Pricing is \$29.95 per pound for steak, \$24.95 for cutlets and \$19.95 a pound for ground ostrich, chili and fajita meat. Pre-cooked summer sausage goes for \$19.95 a pound.

"Until someone started importing pre-cooked ostrich products about a month ago, we were the only ones selling it that we know of," said a Breezy Hill spokeswoman.

Reeves says his volume of about two ostriches a week pales in the face of future potential for developing a market for ostrich meat in America.

"We need to be slaughtering 100,000 year," says Reeves. "South Africa, where the industry is over 100 years old, currently slaughters 150,000 a year. They supply to European countries. What we need is to build the U.S. slaughter market, and that is what I am out to do."

Reeves—who got out of farming and cattle raising several years ago because he says things were getting too tight—positioned himself to benefit if the U.S. ostrich industry ever makes the transition from a breeding to a slaughter market.

It may take a while, though. Reeves looks ahead to a day when ostrich ranching to provide the consumer market becomes a reality.

"It takes a lot fewer acres to raise an ostrich than it does cattle," explained Reeves. "And the profit is a lot more than you get from a \$500 to \$600 yearling calf." Reeves admits ostrich is one of the most highly specialized meat markets in the world—appealing mostly to the health conscious and patrons of exclusive restaurants.

He's supplied ostrich meat to the Dallas metroplex restaurants including the Weston Hotel at the Galleria, for about 16 months, and the Bella Italia West, which serves up exotic game of all types, for about eight months.

Reeves says his bid to raise ostrich has had its ups as well as its major downs. His first pair, on which he staked a major investment did not survive, forcing him to either get out or pick himself up by the bootstraps and try again. He gambled on another pair, a decision that finally paid off.



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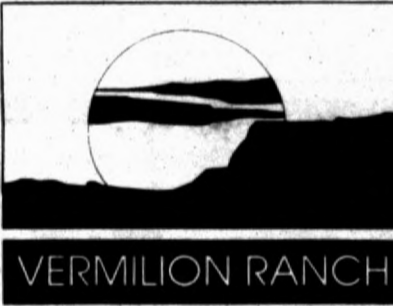
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WEST TEXAS

Rhea is recent arrival adding another dimension to exotic bird ranching in the United States

Special to AgReview

AUSTIN — The North American Rhea Association, based in Austin, is calling the bird it is promoting — a smaller cousin of the Ostrich — as a "new idea" in diversified agriculture.

Despite their fairly recent arrival on the scene, the ratites have been known in South America for a long time for their by products.

The Rhea is commonly known as the South American Ostrich.

Their meat is red with similar levels of cholesterol, fat, calories and protein as chicken and turkey, but tastes similar to beef. Rhea meat is thought to be a health food possibility.

Rhea leather is now on the U.S. market. The boots, often called "baby ostrich" are of the same

look and feel as ostrich.

Research is being pushed to see if Rhea oil can be used in medical or cosmetic items.



Rhea feathers can be washed and dyed for use in the fashion industry.

Infertile Rhea eggs are often blown

out and used in crafts. Pieces from hatched eggs are used in jewelry.

The Rhea stands five to six feet tall and weighs up 75 pounds when fully grown. It reaches breeding age at two years and when eggs are artificially incubated, the female

can lay from 20 to 40 eggs per season. Their laying season runs from March to September and in some cases even longer.

They are often paired, triored or farm or ranch raised.

Rheas are either white or gray in color. Their life span is 20 to 30 years.

Tobacco farmers and cattle ranchers have been among those interested in Rheas in the past few years. The Rhea is the smallest of the ratite family, being closely related to the Emu and Ostrich.

The Rhea egg at one time sold for \$400 on average, able to return investment, some claimed, in 15 to 20 months, some as early as 11 months.

In comparison with cattle ranching, the Rhea has been touted as a good alternative.

A cow in a one care field which may or may not provide enough grazing, according to the rainfall, will consume 50 bales of hay over the winter. Also you will need feed and nutrients to make her strong and nutritious milk for her calf. The return, one and yes the slightest possibility two calves. The market value after one year, \$500-\$700.

In comparison, Rhea eggs have at times fetched \$400 a piece.

That same piece of ground,

enough for 20-30 Rheas, would support far fewer cattle

Advantages of raising Rheas, according to some in the industry, are:

A small amount of land is required, the birds are healthy and require little attention, feed cost are low, \$300 a year, and production is much greater 40-70 eggs.

These same Rheas could bring \$400 for eggs \$1,500 at three months and up to \$20,000 for a breeder pair.

Emu and the granddaddy of the ratite family - the Ostrich - which stands 7-9 feet tall, weighs 400 pounds, have at times sold for up to \$1,500 for an egg and \$60,000-

\$80,000 for the breeding pair.

Their hides used as leather for boots, gloves, purses and jackets. The feathers have a wide variety of uses from clothing to fishing lures, and the meat is an exotic delicacy comparable in taste and texture to beef, but lower in calories and cholesterol.

Possibly the most potential for the future lies in rhea "oil." The birds produce up to five liters of oil that can be used in formulating babies milk because it is found to closely resemble a human mother's milk. The oil is also applicable in honing stainless steel to a smoother surface than most conventional oils.



RHEA SPLENDOR — The Rhea is smaller, but very similar to emu and ostrich



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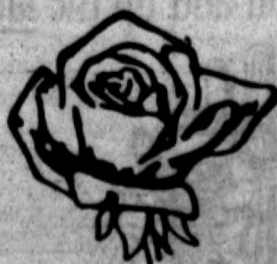
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A simple math test

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- When do they reach slaughter age?
- How much meat is obtained at slaughter?
- How much leather?
- How many were slaughtered commercially last year?
- How long have they been commercially slaughtered?



Ostrich



Emu

60 Years	30 years
35-40 years	20-25 years
50-70	20-25
12-14 months	12-14 months
70-75 pounds	20-25 pounds
12-15 sq. ft.	5-6 sq. ft.
135,000	2,500
over 125 years	2 years

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The Emu, close cousin of the Ostrich, has similar valuable uses

Special to AgReview

THE EMU is the national bird of Australia and is the second largest member of the ratite family of flightless birds, which includes the ostrich, the rhea, the cassowary, and the kiwi.

Emus are native to Australia and were originally imported to the United States as breeding stock for American zoos.

In 1960 the Australian government placed a ban on all emu exportation, which is still in effect today. Emus being raised in the United States today are descendants of those original birds.

Emu Marketability

Because of their growing popularity and marketability, emus are quickly becoming today's alternative livestock for the American farmer. The emu is totally usable, inside and out, and yields a number of marketable products.

Emu meat is seen as the meat of the future and is already a proven consumer favorite in Europe.

Emu is lower in cholesterol and fat, and higher in protein than beef, turkey and chicken, but it looks and tastes like beef. About 50 pounds of red, tender meat is available from each mature bird. Some American restaurants have begun serving emu meat as a delicacy and healthy alternative to beef.

Oil taken from the back of the emu is currently used in several skin care products. The oil is unsaturated, highly penetrating, and non-toxic. For centuries, aborigines have used emu oil for its healing properties. One market aged bird yields 5 to 6 liters of oil. The cosmetic and pharmaceutical potential of the oil is significant.

An adult bird can yield about 10 square feet of high quality leather. Ratite hide is widely used in upscale products such as boots, handbags, and clothing. The distinctive appearance of the emu hide makes it a premium exotic leather.

Emu feathers can be dyed and washed, then used to decorate designer evening wear. Even the eggs and toenails are used in making unique and decorative jewelry.

About the Emu

By nature the emu is curious, docile, and more easily handled than other ratites. A mature adult will stand 5 to 6 feet tall and weigh 11.0 to 140 pounds. Emus are strong runners and can match speeds up to 40 miles per hour in short bursts. They are very hardy and can adapt well to temperature extremes in excess of 100 degrees to below zero.

Emu hens have been known to produce eggs for up to 20 years or more, and may lay as many as 20 to 50 eggs per season. They can begin laying as young as 18 months, but normally start laying at 2 to 3 years of age. Laying season begins in late November or December, but some wait until

January.

Emu eggs are about 4 or 5 inches long and are opaque green in color. Eggs are collected at night, and should be handled delicately, with no violent shaking. During laying season, hens normally lay every third or fourth night. Eggs should be collected as soon as possible.

Wiping mud and dirt from eggs is important, since dirt can clog pores in the egg and may prevent embryos from receiving enough oxygen. Eggs should always be marked and weighed. An egg will incubate for about 52 days before hatching.

New chicks should be kept in a brooder for several days. Brooders can be anything from a cardboard box to a box made from plywood and wire.

Since young chicks tend to huddle together and may smother each other, no more than 10 or 12 chicks should be in one brooder. Chicks are active, and should always have access to run from pen to pen. Exercise is healthy and necessary to a chick's development.

Feedings should be kept to the same time daily and in the same amounts. Since emus have no teeth, grit or small gravel may be added to their diet to aid digestion, but this should be done under the advice of a veterinarian. Major feed companies are creating new nutritionally balanced feed products for emus. An adult can consume 2 to 4 gallons of water daily, so fresh water is essential and should always be available.

It is important that shelter provide adequate shade and ventilation. Shelter should be about 6 feet high; and should provide a wind-break in winter and shade in summer. Barbed wire should never be used. Because emus are fence runners, posts should be placed on the outside to prevent injury. Chicks should be put up every night. A small mesh wire can safely keep chicks in and predators out. Successful breeding has been accomplished in pens that range in size from 25 feet by 40 feet and 25 feet by 100 feet.

Emus should be moved in an enclosed stock trailer in early evening during the summer to prevent heat stress. Darkness keeps the birds calm. Floors should be padded with matting or hay for footing to avoid muscle or leg injury.

Getting Started

When getting started there are several options a new breeder should consider. Most existing farms and ranches have facilities easily adaptable to emu breeding and don't require extensive investment. An emu ranch requires less land than is needed for cattle.

There are many options for first time buyers. Purchasing fertile eggs is least expensive, but



Majestic strutting of female Emu seen on Floyd County farm.

requires knowledge of hatching by incubation and the purchase of an incubator. Since eggs can not be candied to guarantee fertility, make sure your contract guarantees a fertile egg. However, this option is risky since the age of the highest mortality rate is from 0 to 2 months.

Another option is the purchase of chicks that are 1 to 6 months old. With this option reproduction is 2 or 3 years away. Purchasing yearlings (young adults) is a more expensive course, but egg production could begin in within one year. Buying proven breeders is the most costly, but allows for production the next season.

Buying Birds

When purchasing birds make a checklist of what to look for:

Be sure to buy unrelated birds. Ask to see the pairs charts and laying records showing they have laid before and total number of eggs hatched. Ask if the chicks have

grown to produce offspring of their own. Make sure your birds are bred in the U.S.

Check the legs. Are they straight? Avoid birds with splayed legs. Are the backs crooked? Are there any feathers missing? Both these factors can be a result of fighting, injury, or mistreatment.

Have the birds sexed several times for accurate results.

What is the temperament of the animal? A gentle hen will usually be a better layer. Does the bird appear listless, obese, or undernourished?

Inspect the facilities. Ask for guarantees in your contract. Ask for all records kept on the birds you are buying and get all agreements in writing. Determine in writing the point at which the birds actually become your property, how the birds will be shipped, who will deliver, and at what expense to you.

o Get insurance.

o And finally, verify all

microchips and tattoos to make sure the birds are not stolen.

The American Emu Association encourages anyone new to the industry to become a member as a way to gather information, keep abreast of industrial developments, and network.

The AEA was founded in May 1989 in Brenham and is a fast-growing national organization composed of emu professionals. AEA is the national database for the emu industry and can provide you with a breeders list, research information, sales and marketing development, and a list of industry publications. There are more than 4500 members in 47 states and 4 foreign countries.

To receive an information packet on the emu, send a \$10 check to the American Emu Association, PO Box 8174, Dallas, TX 75205. Or call 214-559-2321 for more information.

Tech pioneers the U.S. effort to develop emu industry in region

TTUs 'upscale' restaurant to serve gourmet emu dishes

LUBBOCK — Emu Marketing Unlimited (EMU), a national marketing cooperative association, announces teaming up with Texas Tech University in Lubbock to conduct the most extensive Emu Meat and Consumer Perception Study performed to date in the United States.

Hides — thought to have potential demand in the boot industry — will be donated to The Leather Institute at Tech for study, also.

Funding will be provided by EMU, Texas Emu Association Zone 4 and Zone 5, and the Mississippi Emu Association.

Additional funding will probably be provided by each of the other five zones of the Texas Emu Association and some of the other state affiliates.

EMU recognized that in order for Emu meat to be old in the mainstream meat market of the United States that scientific studies will have to be conducted to establish the basis for labeling approved by the Food and Drug Administration. Phase I of this project is a very crucial step, not just for the members of EMU, but for the entire emu industry, in obtaining such FDA approval.

Phase I also includes cooking and sensory evaluations, important steps in a future for USA emu meat. Phase II of the Texas Tech Project will be the most extensive and comprehensive consumer perception study of emu meat in the U.S.

EMU originally agreed to fund one-half of this project with Texas Tech securing matching funds from the Texas Department of Agriculture. The review panel at the Department of Agriculture, perhaps in need of education about how the emu can contribute to the Texas economy, decided that TDA will not fund this project at this time.

Hearing this, and realizing the importance of this study, by unanimous vote at a members meeting, Zone 5 of the Texas EMU Association agreed to fund one-seventh of the amount turned down by the TDA. That zone also challenged the other six TEA zones to follow suit and also fund one-seventh of the project. Zone 4 agreed to do so almost immediately. Mississippi has agreed to fund \$5,000 of the projects. It appears to be only a matter of time until the remaining Zones, and even state organizations,

follow suit and the project will be fully funded.

Phase I of the study, already under way, consists of processing 30 emus, performing accepted scientific analyses of different cuts of meat (muscle groups) to determine the fat, protein, ash, cholesterol, fatty acid and other trace minerals and vitamins necessary for FDA labeling.

Also, the calorie content will be calculated. Composition studies will be performed on both raw and cooked meat. Further, at the time of processing, micro biological studies will be performed to determine salmonella presence, coliform contents and other similar types of data. Only one other study of this data is known, and the Tech study will verify and validate any duplication. The Tech study is designed to help our industry get the data needed to make emu meat a viable product in the future.

Another part of Phase I will determine the best temperature to cook the emu meat and begin a comprehensive consumer perception study. A trained panel will evaluate the sensory quality of the meat and compare it to other types of meat. Other types of evaluations included in the first phase will help us develop an effective approach to marketing emu meat.

Phase II of the study concludes the consumer perception portion of the study. Part of the emu meat will be prepared in a variety of methods and served to a consumer panel to determine the consumer acceptance of the meat.

This phase will be conducted in the upscale restaurant operated by the University's Restaurant, Hotel and Institutional Management School.

The remainder of the meat will be served to the public in the restaurant, and will be prepared by three of the finest chefs in Lubbock. Data will be collected about participants' prior knowledge of emus and emu meat to evaluate the effect of their perceptions.

This type of information is thought to be invaluable in developing the emu industry's marketing approach to mainstream America's meat market. In addition to the meat studies, The Leather Institute, also located at Tech, will study effective ways of tanning hides for commercial use. These studies will focus on the use of vegetable products as tannins.

The commitment of EMU is to use only products obtained from American emus. A portion of the emus for the study can be non-breeder quality.

AUCTION

MR. AND MRS. C. B. FANCHER, Owners

Time: 10:00 A.M. **Sat., MARCH 19, 1994** Terms: Cash

Location: 1 mile west on Highway 70 and 1 mile north of Olton, Texas.

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- 1 - 1985 Grand Wagoneer Jeep, 4x4, new rubber, battery, muffler; clean and nice

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- 1 - Kelvinator refrigerator - nice
- 1 - G.E. refrigerator - apartment size
- 1 - Large chest deep freeze
- 1 - Ironing ironer
- 1 - Kitchenaid dishwasher (needs soap dispenser)
- 1 - Whirlpool washing machine
- 1 - Whirlpool clothes dryer
- 1 - Console humidifier, McGraw-Edison
- 1 - RCA portable TV
- 1 - Naugahyde sofa - long
- 1 - Round pedestal table
- 2 - End tables
- 1 - Maple dining room suite, with three leaves and six chairs
- 1 - Blond buffet
- 1 - Birdseye maple bedroom suite, bed, dresser, and nightstand
- 1 - Bedroom suite, bed, dresser, and chest
- 1 - Set bunk beds - frame only
- 5 - Bar stools
- 1 - Lot table lamps
- 1 - Set stainless flatware
- 1 - Pressure cooker/canner
- 1 - Lot small appliances: toasters, can openers, skillet, grill, waffle iron, corn popper, foot fixer, bean pot, spotiter, iron, vegetable and fruit juicer, etc.

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- 1 - Gebro's air compressor, 1 h.p., 100 p.s.i.
- 1 - 1 h.p. electric grinder
- 1 - Alltrade air wrench
- 1 - Electric air compressor, 115 volt
- 1 - Craftsman gasoline chain saw
- 1 - Electric chain saw, 12 volt
- 1 - Black & Decker workmate
- 2 - Wheelbarrows
- 1 - Craftsman 2-drawer tool chest
- 1 - KMC electric soldering iron
- 1 - Craftsman jig saw
- 1 - Skil saw, 7 1/2", 2 1/8 h.p., new
- 1 - Electric screw driver
- 1 - Come-a-long
- 1 - Screw bumper jack
- 1 - Lot work shelves and benches
- 1 - Lot air hoses
- 1 - Lot assorted small boxes
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- 1 - Lot bolts, nuts, pipe fittings
- 1 - Lot hammers, pipe wrenches, chains
- 1 - Lot grease guns, shovels, hoses, torqs
- 1 - Measuring wheel
- 1 - Small air tank
- 1 - Lot toolbar clamps
- 1 - Chevrolet pickup muffler
- 1 - Pair car ramps
- 1 - Pair scissor jacks
- 1 - Electric motor
- 1 - 5-stage irrigation 12" pump bowls, rebuilt and run one year
- 1 - Lot used tires
- 1 - Lot used lumber

LAWN MOWERS AND YARD EQUIPMENT

- 1 - JD riding mower, 175 Hydro, like new
- 1 - JD utility trailer for mower
- 1 - Craftsman self-propelled lawn mower, 3 1/2 h.p., 22" blade, still in warranty
- 1 - Range King self-propelled lawn mower, 3 1/2 h.p., 22" blade
- 1 - Weed Eater, 12"
- 1 - Weed Eater blower
- 1 - Western Auto weeder, 12"
- 1 - Electric lawn edger
- 1 - Electric hedge trimmer
- 2 - Traveling lawn sprayers
- 1 - Tree pruner
- 1 - Lot garden hoses
- 2 - Folding lawn chairs
- 2 - Metal lawn chairs
- 1 - 2 gallon hand sprayer

MISCELLANEOUS

- 1 - Lennox central heating system, 110,000 BTU input
- 1 - Redwood picnic table
- 1 - Brinkman smoker
- 1 - Water heater for travel trailer, electric/butane
- 2 - Iron pots
- 1 - Lot tackle boxes and fishing equipment
- 1 - Cotton scale
- 1 - Aluminum cot
- 1 - Schwinn bike, approximately 20"
- 2 - Tarps, 1 small and one approximately 12'x16'
- 2 - Aluminum step ladders
- 1 - 16' aluminum extension ladder
- 1 - Small step ladder
- 1 - Fluorescent desk lamp
- 2 - Stereo speakers, SP-300
- 1 - Claret
- 1 - Christmas tree and stand
- 1 - Lot candles
- 1 - Lot luggage
- 1 - Lot books
- 1 - Set Compton's encyclopedia year books
- 1 - Ice cream freezer, hand crank
- 1 - Set fireplace tools
- 1 - Lot fruit jars
- 1 - Lot freezer containers
- 1 - Set quilting frames
- 1 - TV antenna
- 1 - Wash tub
- 1 - Chamber pot
- 1 - Aquarium
- 1 - Metal detector
- 1 - Square table
- 1 - Car vac
- 1 - Lot extension cords
- 1 - Antique ice chest
- 1 - Kitchen cart
- 2 - Electric fans
- 1 - Saw horse

- 1 - Large pressure tank
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Emu raiser sees future potential for industry in West Texas

■ Carrie J. Tisdale markets her own line of emu oil cosmetics

LUBBOCK — Emu raisers like Carrie J. Tisdale of Lubbock are talking up their industry as one of the keys to future diversification of South Plains agriculture.

She likes to talk about big dreams for the future, like location of value-added processing industries in the West Texas area, dedicated to the processing of emu and ostrich leather, extraction of oils for cosmetics and other allied industries.

There has been talk of building tanneries in West Texas in the event this becomes a hub of emu production.

Dr. Ginger Eberspacher at Texas Tech's Leather Institute is one of the researchers looking into the potential for emu leather goods. Members of the emu organizations have agreed to donate birds to be used in the study.

But all these dreams will depend on expansion of emu growing, and continued research by entities like Texas Tech, which is launching one of the first emu marketing studies in the country this year.

"The whole key is diversification," says Ms. Tisdale, whose fellow members of the Texas Emu Association include a number of farm and ranch operators.

"We consider ourselves the new diversified ag industry," she said. "Nearly anyone can raise them. Put them on small plot of land. They can supplement existing cotton, cattle operations. It is something you can do and keep a fulltime job. But I also know those who quit a fulltime job to go into birds

full time."

"The hail may come, the winds may blow and the rain may not fall, but you can still raise these birds," she says.

Tisdale got into the Emu business after working in the retail industry at a South Plains Mall outlet for several years.

A director of the Texas Emu Association, she is currently active in efforts to have Texas Tech University study the market potential for emu. She operates WesTex Ratite ranch as well as Kalaya [Aborigine for Emu] Enterprises, which markets emu based products.

She believes Texas is a logical place to concentrate the industry. Of the 4,500 members of the national emu association, half are located in Texas.

The Lubbock business woman also pushes the potential for selling emu meat.

"Everyone can benefit from a heart healthy red meat low in cholesterol, calories and fat," she says.

She cites the benefits of subcutaneous fat from the back of the emu, which is used as a skin moisturizer.

Other Texans now pushing the emu include Ardell Nelson, a San Antonio businessman who has store devoted almost sole-

ly to emu products — jackets to boots and leather goods.

Tisdale herself is involved in emu breeding and sales, the marketing of her own line of emu oil cosmetics and is active in boosting her industry.

"I've been doing this a little over four years," she explained. You have to understand, I have no background in agriculture."

Currently working on a master's degree at Texas Tech in counseling, she says she got interested in the Emu because of its many market potential that weren't being developed.

Her own interest in getting involved in developing emu markets first hand led her to introduce a new cosmetic product whose ingredients include emu oil.

The result of a product put together in cooperation with a Lubbock dermatologist, Alexander Zemtsov, is a product called "Beauty Skin by Alexander."

There are several distributors selling it across the United States, plus it is available Caprock Pharmacy at 50th and Boston in Lubbock. She hopes to break into markets like Nieman Marcus, a store which is handling other emu products, she said.

"Our particular product has no competi-

tion," she said. "It is the only one that combines emu oil, which is a deep penetrating lipid with the benefits of alpha hydroxyl acid — a natural chemical made from natural acids."

"Everyone that has used the product just loves it," says Ms. Tisdale. "They report significant improvement of appearance and texture of the skin. Ours is the only dermatologically-formulated and tested and approved product on the market."

Operator of WestTex Ratite Ranch, Ms. Tisdale has been impressed with the profit potential of the bird breeding business.

"I know several breeders who have raised cotton for 40 to 50 years and will tell you, right off the bat they make more with birds than they can with cotton," she said. "I am not slamming cotton, it is the basis of our existence out here, but this is something you can supplement with, look forward to the future."

What has attracted many is the small number of acres needed to raise emus.

Tisdale notes that most raisers she knows are in it for the long haul, not as a novelty item.

Ms. Tisdale is a member of the board of directors of Zone 6 of the Texas Emu Association, which includes about 150 members concentrated in the Lubbock area or spreading out from there to the New Mexico and Oklahoma borders and east to Wichita Falls.

Its northern region meets regularly in the Sunray/Dumas area. The Lubbock region meets monthly. Darlee Foster of Lockney is the current zone vice president.

Emus have been raised in Texas for up to 10 years, Tisdale says. Many are raised in South America.

Some of the positive qualities of emus are their tameness and docile personalities.

Along with the interest in emus, some Panhandle residents are becoming interested in Rheas. The Rheas yield leather that is much like the emu, but whose looks is more like ostrich hide.

Much Rhea is marketed under the name of South American ostrich or baby ostrich, she said. Rhea also yields red meat that tastes like beef, she said.



Carrie J. Tisdale with *Beautiskin*, which contains emu oil.

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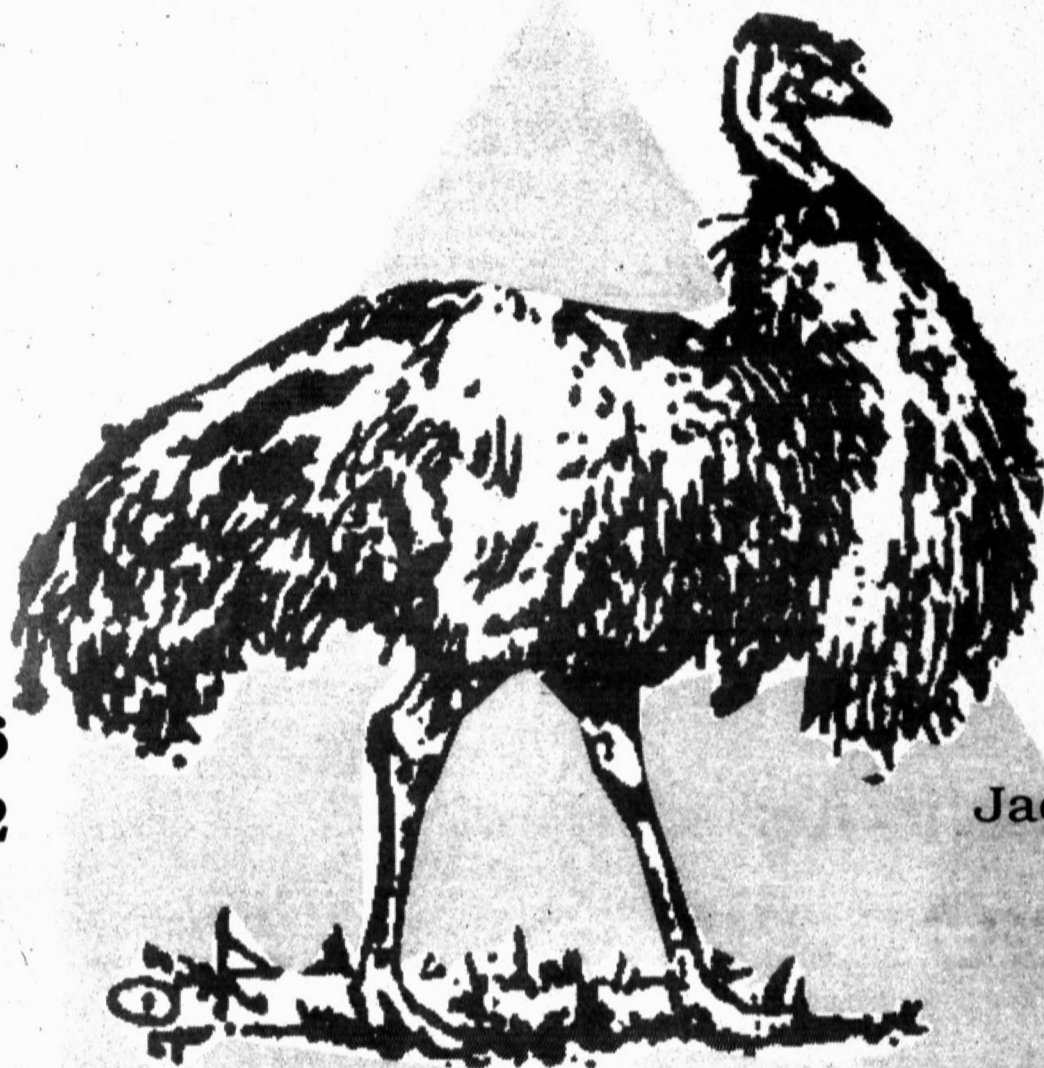
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