

Crescent Ranch Raises Shetland Ponies, Chinchillas

CRESCENT — The Biddens, lots of practice for what to do when the years roll around to anzie and Irene, are getting retirement time. They've gone into business raising shetland ponies, chinchillas and horses. They call their place the "M Circle I." You'll find it along Highway 97 just south of Crescent.

Mannie has lots of daylight for feeding ponies and horses because his regular employment is at night as watchman for the Gilchrist Timber Company.

The past year, when he wasn't catching up on sleep of doing chores, he was building a spacious new home and they've recently moved in. In the rear portion of their new headquarters is a separate apartment for their chinchillas.

The Biddens got the idea for raising the furry animals on television and went into the business about a year and a half ago. To start with they bought three pairs and one baby, plus their cages. Later they paid \$80 for another female.

Their investment now totals around \$5,000 and their chinchilla family numbers 91. But they are beginning to sell some back to the cooperative, bringing some return on the investment. When pelts are auctioned they bring about \$20 apiece.

The important thing, according to Mannie, is to keep them clean, keep their temperature right and give them plenty of food.

The temperature of their apartment is electrically controlled, between 60 and 70 degrees. Individual pens, each with its own water supply, are arranged in neat tiers.

The housekeeping chores are mostly Irene's responsibility. It takes two to three hours a day to clean the pens and change the drinking water. A few babies require separate feeding, giving them milk with an eye-dropper until the mother assumes her responsibility.

"The young are wild little creatures," says Irene. "But they are born with their eyes open and furred out. And the female is boss."

Lots of threes have helped the year's crop. Chinchillas can produce, from one to five young, though five is unusual.

There's been an increase in the pony department, too, since this venturesome couple invested \$10,000 in a dozen mares some four years ago. Today's count of yearlings, studs, geldings and mares in foal adds up to 33. Their stallion is of the famous Farago strain.

Pony sales have been chiefly to families looking for pets for the children. Typical of this small breed of horse is their good disposition, noticeable as they follow Mannie around the barnlot at feeding time.

The horse census would list three mares, Dusty, Ginger and Dolly. Their respective half-Arabian colts are Sultan, Duke and Silky.

There's no substitute for the loyalty and affection of their ponies and horses, but the Biddens do feel that raising chinchillas has one big advantage: caring for them means keeping cool in summer and warm in winter. And there's no snow to wade through to feed them hay and pellets.

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PTA Schedules Spring Concert

LAKEVIEW — The annual spring concert of the Lakeview Parent-Teacher Association will be held at 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 28, at the Junior High Auditorium.

In connection with the concert there will be an art exhibit sponsored by the Lake County Art Group, in which local adult arts have been invited to take part.

Mrs. Latrelle Smoot is chairman of the concert and Mrs. Jack Lewis handled arrangements for the art exhibit.

English Gets Indian Boost

NEW DELHI (UPI) — India's ruling Congress party moved today to give English equal status with Hindi as official languages of this multi-tongued country.

The move was prompted by three weeks of bloody rioting in southern India in which at least 55 persons lost their lives protesting the "imposition" last month of Hindi as the only official language.

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