

Geese are weed-killers

United Press International
BOISE, Idaho — An Idaho organic food grower has come up with a method less expensive and less environmentally harmful than the use of chemicals to rid crops of weeds and has turned it into a profitable business. Idaho Seed Co. of Burley has been using weed-eating geese for about one year.

President Bill Rolley said the company was searching for an alternative method to destroy weeds after chemical weed killers were ruled out because of their potential for contamination, and hand picking of weeds was found to be too expensive.

"We've been growing organically for years," Rolley said. "And we'd come up with only two methods of weeding — by hand and with chemicals. We don't use chemicals because we feel they are detrimental to the crop and the soil and hand picking is extremely expensive."

The company now has 80,000 Chinese Weeder geese which it uses to weed its own fields and also leases to area farmers.

He said the geese were originally produced in China about 2,000 years ago. Since that time, cross-breeding has increased the size of the white bird to about that of a swan, Rolley said.

The geese can be used to weed many crops although they also may nibble on leafy plants such as spinach and lettuce. Rolley said the geese cannot be used to weed grain crops but can be used in corn after the plant reaches a certain height.

He said the cost of using geese to get rid of weeds

initially is about the same as using chemicals. But geese get cheaper to use, he said.

Aside from the obvious elimination of chemical contaminants, geese help enrich the soil because their manure is a good fertilizer, Rolley said. He said the geese also do not compact the soil as a tractor pulling a chemical sprayer would and do not require petroleum products to operate.

The use of weeder geese also helps avoid the creation of "super weeds," Rolley said, weeds which develop immunities to a chemical after it has been used for a time.

The geese also can be a source of income through sale of the young and meat. Rolley said each fall the company butchers many of the ganders and sells them to supermarkets for roasting.

The weeder geese have caught on in the Burley area. Rolley said about 20 farmers used the geese to weed about 10,000 acres this year. The company also used the geese on its 1,000 acres of carrots, potatoes, onions, lentils and peas.

And Rolley said the company has been contacted by persons from every state and England interested in obtaining some of the geese.

The firm hopes to begin advertising baby goslings for sale soon in magazines. Rolley said the goslings will begin hatching in April and will range in price from 50¢ for \$7 each to 10,000 or more for \$3.25 each.

The National Parks Service is interested in discovering if weeder geese could rid weeds from wilderness areas where the use of chemicals is banned.

Masterson letter thief charged

United Press International
NEW HAVEN, Conn. — A Colorado man has been charged with the July theft of letters by notorious gun-fighter Bat Masterson from the Connecticut State Library, the FBI reports.

Stephen D. Englert, 41, of Loveland, Colo., a collector of Colt firearms, was charged Thursday at his home with receiving and attempting to sell the letters.

L. Gray Brockman, FBI special agent in charge in Connecticut, said the letters, written by Masterson to the Colt Firearms Co. of Hartford during the 1880s, were recovered.

He said the letters, now valued at \$40,000, concerned the purchase of firearms by the Western gunslinger.

Englert was scheduled to go before a federal magistrate in Denver. He faces a \$10,000 fine and a 10-year prison term if convicted.

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Cheerleader now rodeo daredevil

United Press International
INGLEWOOD, Calif. — Robin Sindorf, a clown and a daredevil, dances into the rodeo ring and delights the crowd by teasing a hulking, snorting bull that weighs nearly as much as a Volkswagen, and daring him to gore her.

As one of the first female barrel clowns in the business, Robin is a rodeo performer, but not much of a horseback rider, she admits.

"There's a lot of guys who won't get in that barrel," said Robin, 21, a Texan who put down her pom-poms after a stint as a Dallas Cowboys cheerleader, left the world of beauty pageants where she won some titles, and took on the rough and tumble life of the rodeo.

She prefers disco dress to cowgirl garb, and brings a touch of it to the clown role she plays on the western rodeo circuit.

Robin is a clown with a contemporary, feminine touch. She curls her long dark hair before each performance, and appears in the ring wearing loose-fitting cutoff blue jeans over a leotard and tights or a shiny satin shirt. Her face makeup is a simple white star-shaped design, which never varies.

When the bull enters the ring, Robin earns her pay. Distracting the bull from goring the rider he has just bucked off, Robin faces the same risk as a matador.

She waves a white bra at the bull, which gets a laugh from the crowd. Then, perched atop her barrel, she swipes at the thundering mass of beef with a broom.

"When the bull dumps his rider and comes for me, I jump in the barrel," said Robin. "It's really frightening to peer out and see him standing there."

Occasionally, crouched in her special fiberglass cocoon, Robin is propelled around the ring on the end of the bull's horns, or pitched as high as 15 feet into the air.

If she fell out, the bull probably would stomp and gore her, she said. So she clings to the straps inside the barrel and braces herself against the staves.

Two years ago millions of football fans could see Robin on television doing cheerleader routines for the Dallas Cowboys. The 5-foot 8-inch, green-eyed brunette enjoyed the fanfare for awhile, but did not try out for a second season. "I had the feeling I wasn't going anywhere."

She had met Doug Wylie, a professional rodeo bullfighter, and they began dating. Robin went to work for a beauty pageant operator in Reno, Nev. and Doug worked the rodeo circuit.

She began hanging around the rodeo, doing odd jobs and begging for a chance to break in.

"Doug said 'why don't you get in the barrel? We need a gimmick out there,'" Robin remembers.

"I said 'well, heck, I'll do it once.' I didn't ever think about doing it again. But the people just went wild. Even the bullrider was cheering me on."


Now she travels with the Flying U Rodeo to 68 rodeos a year in California, Utah, Washington and Idaho.

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Search unsuccessful

United Press International
ATLANTA — More than 2,000 volunteers searched backyards and wooded areas Saturday for two of 14 black children who have disappeared in Atlanta in recent months, but found only shreds of clothing, some stolen property and a few animal bones, said Dean.

Searchers, armed with sticks, rakes and other garden tools, used citizen band radios to keep in touch with their home base.

Since July, 1979, 14 black children from poor neighborhoods have disappeared. So far, 10 have been found dead.

Volunteers last weekend found the body of 7-year-old Latonya Wilson on the south side of town. This weekend, the search shifted to east Atlanta.

Mayor Maynard Jackson said, "I'm proud of the spirit, the will and the determination of the people of Atlanta."


"We're finding a lot of dogs, a lot of stolen property, other animal bones," said Dean.

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