FALL FARM



Harvest Time in the Pumpkin Patch...Will the Great Pumpkin Emerge?

Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston

Leslie's Game Birds a rare and unique find

by Sandra Lee Johnston
Chieftain Staff Reporter

"It has always been my dream and I'm going to start my dream!" Janice Leslie and her husband John came to Matilda from Exator where she saw such birds as are in her flight pen in the wild. "I never saw any around here," she says.

John's company transferred him here twelve years ago and we are still here...

A true menagerie of feathered friends, Janice, John and their entire family: two daughters and two sons pitch-in, this game bird business is a real family affair...

Perhaps the most sticking thing one notices upon entering the yard is the male peacock. Down east on what was always known in Matilda township as the Fourth Concession stands an older, most formidable white frame house and east of the house is a large bird pen filled with a variety of game birds.

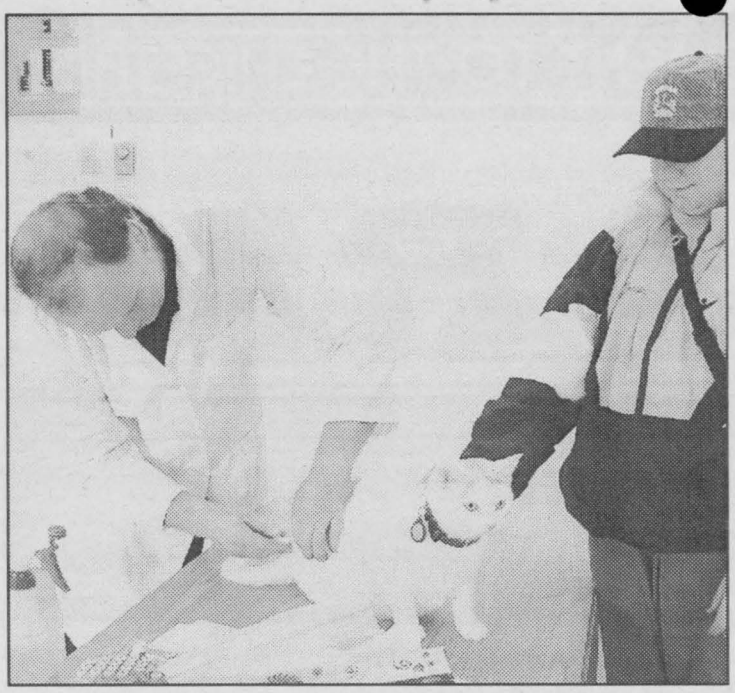
Game birds are a rather unique choice. To Janice though they are certainly the only choice. "It was always a dream of mine to be in the bird business, it just had not happened yet," says this woman who seems content with her choice. "I came home from a bird auction one day with a pair of pheasants and 20 quail and decided to go into business," continues Janice with a smile as we watch the various birds in the flight pen.

As we walked across the yard to the pen this reporter is introduced to some Cornish Standard hens (a mix between a Barred hen and a Cornish). Next we are greeted by some Muscovy Ducks who are enjoying themselves in a pool of fresh water. Then we get to the flight pen and a close up of some Peafowl which almost take your breathe away, they are so very striking. There are also guinea fowl. "These are referred to nowadays as a poor man's pheasant," explains Janice; "We got them originally for adversaries against skunks, and there is a call for them as meat birds." She points to three types of Guineas: Pearl, White and Lavender. She also tells about a friend who flew back from Germany in First Class where she was fed Guinea Fowl and found it so delightful she foretold the demand that would grow for this exquisite delight.

Admiring "George" the Peacock Janice tells me that their meat is reported to be very excellent. "There are lots of recipes in my cookbooks for their meat and their feathers also help pay the feed bill."Janice explains that her Peacock feathers travel all the way to New Zealand...a woman contacted me through the Internet. She uses them in paper, jewellery and cards and so once a month I send her what feathers I have collected." She laughs as she says, "I not only collect eggs, but feathers as well, they fetch $1. each and in this business every little bit helps." While on the subject we learn that Pheasant tail-feathers are popular for quills as well. "A lot of by-product here," says Janice, "We are looking to expand the feather market too."

"These birds "live on the edge"

Please turn to page 7



"Jewel" finds it no problem to get her rabies shot.
Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston

Early frost reduces yield

Local cash croppers were not happy with the early frost that welcomed fall this year. The temperatures dipped below -2 degrees Celcius in many parts, damaging the leaves on the soybean and corn plants.

While the OMAFRA field crop specialist, Gilles Quesnel explains, "It was not an outright killing frost only because the temperature was not below -2 long enough for plants to shut down completely."

Certainly it is evident to even the untrained eye that the top leaves of the soybean plants have been affected. The good news is that there was not much damage to the bean pods and those fields where the leaves were already turning yellow, the yield and quality will not be reduced according to Quesnel. The problem for the farmers lies in those feilds where the leaves were still green that the impact will be the greatest.

The best advice for those farmers who have their crops affected is to harvest the beans as soon as they reach the desired 15 per cent moisture. The pods of beans that have been frozen shatter more easily in front of the combine.

This is somewhat inevitable at this time of year since the average frost date is September 26 and this year we were hit on the 25th.

The situation according to Quesnel is similar as far as corn goes. Mature fields of corn will not be affected by the frost, while those requiring more growing time will definitely see yields reduced. It is estimated that about one half of the local crop will suffer negligible impact from the frost while the other half will suffer in yield and quality. Another 10 days would have been great, but it was not so cold that the shanks of the corn plants froze, so things are not too bad. This means the connection between the cob and the stock did not die and so some photosynthesis will still occur and those plants will be able to translocate nutrients.

A reduced amount of photosynthesis will take place this week after which time it won't matter whether the corn freezes or not. The worst case scenerio now would be for the mornings to be muggys and hot causing dampness in the fields. Damp plants are susceptible to various moulds. The corn needs sunny, breezy conditions to keep the husks dry.

Overall the weather conditions this past month have been favourable to producers since there have been few heavy downpours and September did provide more hours of sun then August was able to give us.

It is important to remember that leaves on plants will dry out and dry leaves on corn should not be mistaken for signs of low misture in the corn kernels. Corn silage moisture content for optimal fermentation are 60-70 per cent for an upright top loading silo, 50-60 per cent for an upright bottom loading silo and 67-72 per cent for a bunker silo.

While OMAFRA expects the yeilds to be below average for the area, but not in the disaster category. While many producers will be disappointed this year most will not suffer awfully low yeilds and so for most it will not make a big difference.

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Safety first: biotechnology and a regulatory system

by Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief

The road to the future for Canada's agriculture industry is paved with new ideas and creative thinking, with progress spurred on by the desire to go where no one has ever gone. The trip down this road is exciting, but the possibility of bumps and curves on untravelled territory can raise apprehension and sometimes anxiety.

Canada's biotechnology industry is a long-time traveller on this road, but its newest engine, the ability to genetically enhance food, has some people worried it will exceed a safe speed.

To ensure that doesn't happen, the Government of Canada has put in place a regulatory system -- a governor, if you will -- to make sure biotechnology, or any other vehicle on this road to the future, follows all the safety rules.

If there is one thing I have stressed while I have been Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, it is that safety -- of consumers, animals and the environment -- is paramount. Nothing proceeds down that road unless it is safe, based on the latest and best scientific knowledge we have.

Biotechnology can be a confusing term. Simply put, it refers to the use of biology as a tool to create new products. This has been going on for years with everything from using enzymes to make cheese, to carefully breeding plants to make them healthier and better. Now, biotechnology is moving beyond its traditional roots to what is sometimes called genetic enhancement. With today's technology, scientists can actually transfer the genetic material from one living thing to enhance the characteristics of another. This process of genetic engineering offers tremendous new possibilities for the agriculture and agri-food industry.

Already, genetic engineering has created potato and canola crops that are resistant to pests and herbicides. This has dramatically reduced the need for chemical spraying while increasing yield and quality.

An exciting new development in this field is called molecular farming. It has also been called a marriage between agriculture and health care. It uses biotechnology to stimulate crop plants to produce pharmaceutical substances, such as proteins and enzymes, which can be used to treat and prevent human and animal diseases.

As important as any of these developments may be, however, the bottom line is not moveable: no matter what the potential benefits of any new product, it will not be approved for production unless it is safe.

Canada prides itself on having one of the world's safest food supplies. One of the reasons we enjoy this reputation is that our safety assessments on new agricultural products are thorough, complete and scientifically sound.

Before a new crop is approved for production or confined field trials, including one that has been derived through biotechnology, it must pass through a series of tests designed to protect the health of humans, animals and the environment.

When developers wish to market a plant, they must provide all of the information required to carry out an environmental safety assessment. The applicant must provide detailed information about the new characteristics, the method used to introduce the new trait to the plant, and the effects and impacts resulting from the release of the plant.

For a plant with new characteristics to be approved, scientists must consider its potential to become a weed of agriculture or to be invasive of natural habitats, the potential for gene-flow to wild relatives, the potential for the plant to become a plant pest, the potential impact of the plant or its gene products on non-target species (including humans), and the potential impact on biodiversity.

A similar and equally rigorous system of assessment and approval exists for any food products derived from biotechnology. Health Canada evaluates applications based on principles developed by scientists around the world through international agencies such as the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

If you have any comments about this column or other topics you would like to see addressed, please don't hesitate to contact me at: **http://www.agr.ca/cb/mail/emailmin.html** Or, you can write to me at: Lyle Vanclief, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Sir John Carling Building, 930 Carling Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0C5.

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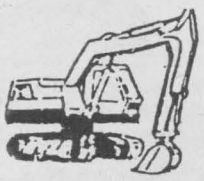
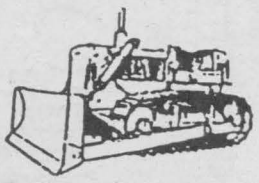
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Upper Canada Village preparing for winter



Pressing Apple Cider at the village.

Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston

As the season draws to a close, Upper Canada Village will be bustling with activity as villagers race against time to prepare for the winter months ahead, much as our ancestors would have done more than 130 years ago. Harvesting field and garden crops was a lot of work in the 1860s, but it was also a festive time. See how careful planning went into winterizing and how harvest time was celebrated during "Preparing for Winter" at the Village began last Saturday last and continue until Monday, October 9. A special "Harvest Home" church service will also be held on Monday at 2pm at Christ Church featuring a guest choir and period music.

Thanksgiving as we know it was not yet official in the 1860s, most rural communities celebrated once the harvest was completed. An unofficial way of celebrating the fruits of the harvest, this will be a great way to end the season. A good harvest meant a successful winter, a comforting thought for residents facing the long, dark months ahead.

Throughout the Village characters from the past will be getting ready for winter. The Loucks Farm will demonstrate sauerkraut making, apple cider making and corn stooking (weather permitting), all the traditional way. A horse-powered threshing machine, the latest technology in the 1860s will also be put to the test by farmers. Drying apples and pumpkins was vital to winter survival too. Mattress covers at Cook's Tavern will be stripped of their lumpy contents and re-stuffed. Some other villagers will be spinning and weaving at McDermid House and the Ross House will be busy quilting a patchwork masterpiece.

The Village Store will feature a 40% off Fall promotion and so some early Christmas shopping may be in order before you leave.

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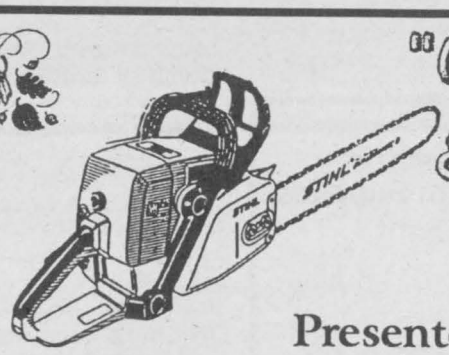


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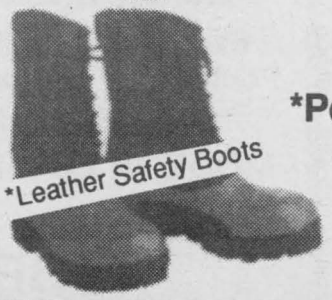
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Rising energy prices a concern for farmers

by Al Gardiner
Ontario Federation of Agriculture Executive Member

Ontario residents expecting competitive electricity rates as a result of the province's deregulation process will have to be vigilant.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, through its research and review of what has emerged from the deregulation process has found resellers charging much more than the Standard Supply Price. The Ontario Energy Board establishes the Standard Supply Price or prices as the case may be. For customers of Hydro One or a local Public Utility Commission, the Standard Supply Price is 4.2 cents per kilowatt hour plus service charges, taxes and other fees.

For anyone buying electric power from an affiliate of Hydro One or PUC, the Standard Supply Price is 5.1 cents per kilowatt hour plus service charges, taxes and other fees.

Research tells us there are resellers with prices as high as 11 cents per kilowatt hour plus taxes, service charges and other fees. Since finding this out the OFA is asking the provincial government to revisit early contracts signed with such resellers, hoping that lower prices can be secured.

When deregulation was first being planned, November 1, 2000 was the implementation date. Energy Minister, Jim Wilson is now looking at implementation dates next spring or even as late as next fall, hoping all potential resellers can have their packages ready for delivery by that time.

From the outset, OFA was anxious about the outcome of deregulation...anxious because we were suspicious rural customers would end up paying considerably more than they have been in the past.

Based on Standard Supply Price, OFA is recommending that customers consider six cents per kilowatt hour plus taxes, fees an other charges as reasonable. Anything above that level would be too high.

The Ontario Energy Board has the authority to adjust the Standard Supply Price as required, but it would seem impractical that this would happen more frequently than twice each year. Because electric power is such a critical component of most farming operations, OFA will be monitoring the process to ensure that the province's farmers are getting the best possible deal.

Dairy, Chicken, Turkey and Hog producers rely heavily on a reliable source of reasonably priced electric energy and anything that deviates from this will create problems for Ontario's farmers.

Bringing competition into the energy supply industry while it sounds encouraging has the potential to introduce a lot of variables the farming industry do not want and could not operate with.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture expects government and its agencies to provide the best possible operating circumstances for farmers and this includes the elimination of wide swings in energy prices ad unreliable service.

Guide to THE PERFECT LAWN

*If you'd like your lawn to be the envy of the neighbourhood, the gardening experts at Home Depot suggest following to grow and maintain the **"Perfect Lawn"**:*

Early Fall

- Apply fertilizer to keep your lawn thicker and greener in the fall.
- Keep leaves well raked. They can kill the grass beneath, especially in shady areas.

Late Fall

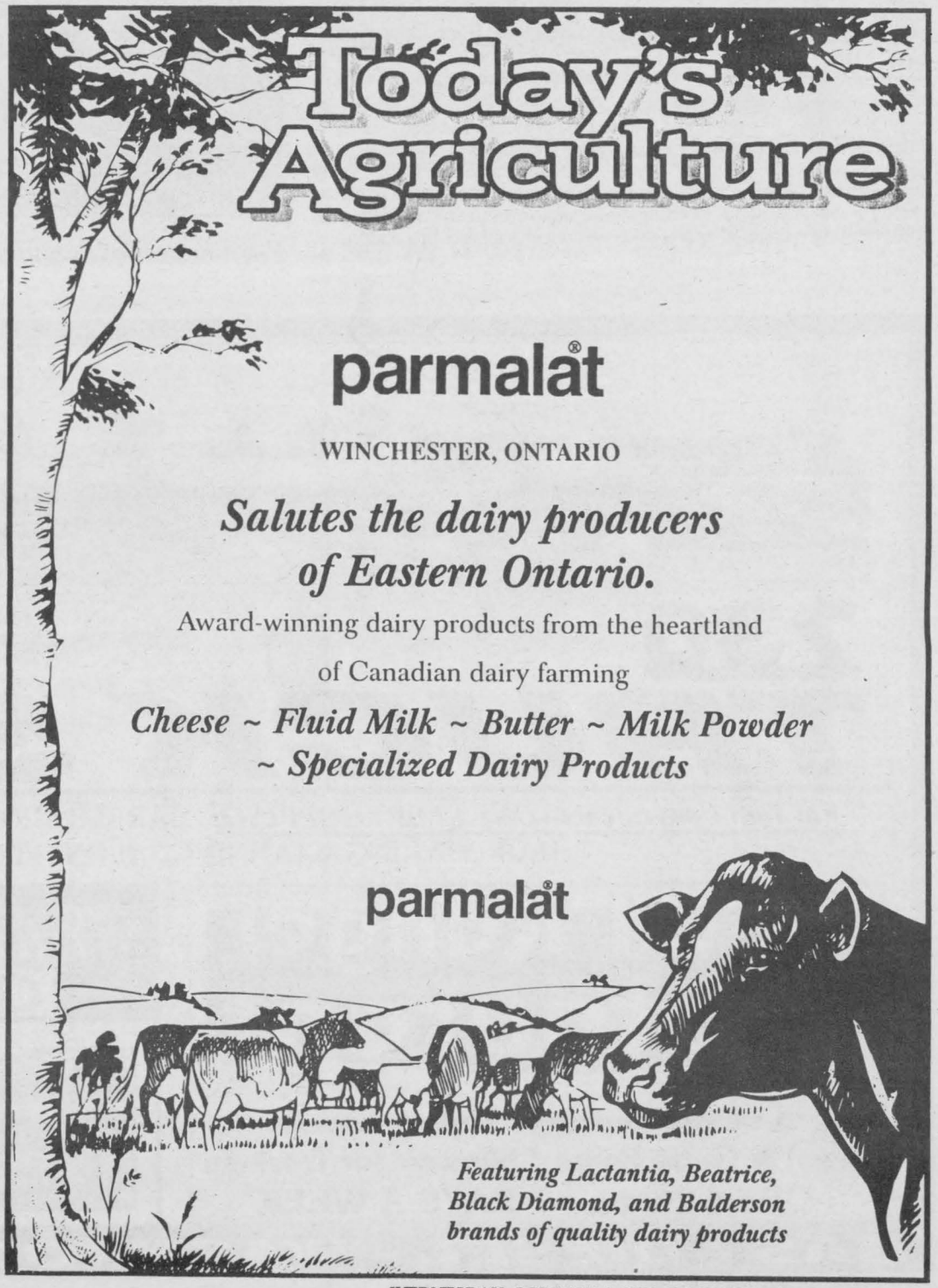
- "Winterize" your lawn with an application of fertilizer made specifically for the season. It will help grass develop stronger roots and green up faster next spring.
- Patch thin or bare spots as needed. Fall is the best time to patch lawns as well as start new lawns from seed or with sod.
- Every two or three years, aerate your lawn. You can hire a lawn service or rent an aerating machine to remove plugs of soil that will break down over the winter.

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Latest in crop equipment demonstrated at Geurkink Farm

by Nelson Zandbergen
Chieftain Staff Reporter

A sure sign of the harvest season is the gathering of local farmers in a cornfield, shooting the breeze, enjoying a good cup of java and viewing the latest innovations in equipment and crop development. Brinston was no exception Friday as Tibben Equipment and Garst Seeds dealer Eric Jansen, a custom-work contractor, drew about 20 farmers to a seed plot on Ron Geurkink's farm.

Farmers watched as a Gehl forage harvester chewed its way through a towering plot of Garst corn — nine varieties bred specifically for silage.

The harvester was noteworthy for its built-in 'crop processor', an innovation meant to bring added capabilities to the standard chop-'em-up harvester design. "They came out just last year," says Doug Tibben, Tibben equipment proprietor.

The processor consists of two cylinder rollers, one on top of the other, through which the chopped silage is passed before being shot into a forage wagon. Squished through the adjustable opening, the resulting silage is more digestible for cattle, Tibben says. "The ultimate goal is to produce more out of your animals.

"It doesn't hamper the capacity of the machine at all," he adds. He also notes that the adjustable feature of the unit allows an easy transition for making haylage.

So far, Tibben has sold three of the crop processing units this year, which are designed to work with Gehl's model 1275 and 1075 harvesters.

Gehl company rep Dave Chillingworth went over the nuts and bolts of the outfit as curious farmers looked on from between rows of recently cut corn stalks.

Also on hand was Garst's Jamie Hall, an agronomist in the company's sales and marketing department, who delivered a mini-seminar on the benefits of each Garst variety.

Garst, the third largest corn-seed company in North America, includes some genetically modified varieties in its catalog, and Hall says the company takes a neutral position on the issue.

He told the farmers that if they are attempting to supply a market for non-genetically altered corn to consider a basic precaution.

"If your neighbour is using Bt corn (a common type of trans-genetically engineered corn, designed to resist corn borer), his pollen may be contaminating your corn," he says, noting a minimum distance of 300 feet needs to be observed to prevent the crossover.

A hot subject locally, too, was the arrival of a killing frost, which is normal for this time of the year. However, many farmers had hoped the arrival of Jack Frost would've been pushed back a little further this year, as wet weather in the spring delayed planting.

At least one farmer at the demonstration was told that his corn should go into silage, after reporting that the kernels had only "dented" in the previous week — too close to what farmers call the "milk line."



Chieftain photo by N. Zandbergen

Farmers take a gander at the new crop processor.



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CONTINUED

Game Birds

Continued from front

when in the wild," explains this bird farmer," They roost on the edge of wooded areas and come out into the fields during the day to feed." She goes on to tell us that the birds stay outside all winter. "We place evergreen trees in the pens to provide shelter and cover for them, but they are very independent birds. They never allow themselves to be touched, although they will eat out of your hand. They are not pets, that is certain."

Also standing out among the other birds is a yellow Golden Pheasant, a smaller bird than the Peacock, but no less brilliant. As this fellow checks out the food tray, his colourful display is evident.

Two young geese are among the birds, soft brown and beige. As they preen and finally settle down, they are ever conscious of their surroundings, long necks never still as they watch the others in the pen. They seem most majestic as they sit there, fourteen-year old daughter, Sodonia, although very camera shy, adds, "They look like brown swans don't they?" She is right, these Chinese Geese are very impressive birds.

Attempting to get a picture of a Ringnecked Pheasant as he sits on a perch, displaying his "peepers", two red pieces, like a rooster comb on his nose, resemble eye glasses. "They are to keep them from seeing too much, so they don't fight. The males are very territorial," explains Janice.

Breeding keeps the stock and every three years the breeding stock is released and replaced. It is worth noting that the birds are bred 1 to 7, that is one male to seven females in what is known as a "harem."They winter outdoors although the bulk of the meat birds are gone during November to become festive meals, and the breeders are all that are left over the winter months.

A unique item we learn concerns the Peacock. "When the male looses his feathers through moulting, he pouts and sulks for some time, seems almost to be ashamed, and this continues until he gets his feathers back and then he struts and fans his tail in an unashamed display."

Janice tells us that each bird has a name and is special in their own way.

Janice proudly shows off her babies inside the barn and her quail laying stock. "We get on average 100 eggs a day. They won't lay unless they are warm." There behind us on a rack is a tray of the smallish be-speckled eggs. "They taste like eggs, can be fried, boiled, pickled, whatever you do with hens' eggs," says Janice. Her son tells us that he has heard of them being hard boiled and rolled inside a meatball and enjoyed this way...sounds yummy! "The pickled quail eggs are aesthetically pleasing and dainty, " says this lady who enjoys her birds. We meet some pretty delicate doves in here too.

The Leslies have three types of Doves as well, Peach, White and Rose and they are the real pets at the farm. They like to land on your shoulder or your head and will eat sunflower seeds from your palm. "They are just so precious," says an admiring owner. It is here we are also introduced to Polish Hens which look like the British singers, the Beatles with their mop tops only these little fellows have feather caps. "Our favourite birds are the Cochin Standards, they look like they are wearing bloomers or PJs, with their feathery legs...and we have Black, Blue, White and Partridge types," says Janice as we head out of the barn.

Janice grows serious as we head to the backyard, "This birding is a risky business. It is a very expensive enterprise. The setup is expensive and the birds are expensive: for example the netting to contain the birds in the 150'x50' pen costs in the area of $2000-$2500. It takes a long time to get any return on your investment in this business. You have to be in it for the long haul, you are not going to see a profit overnight, but we really like it and that helps."

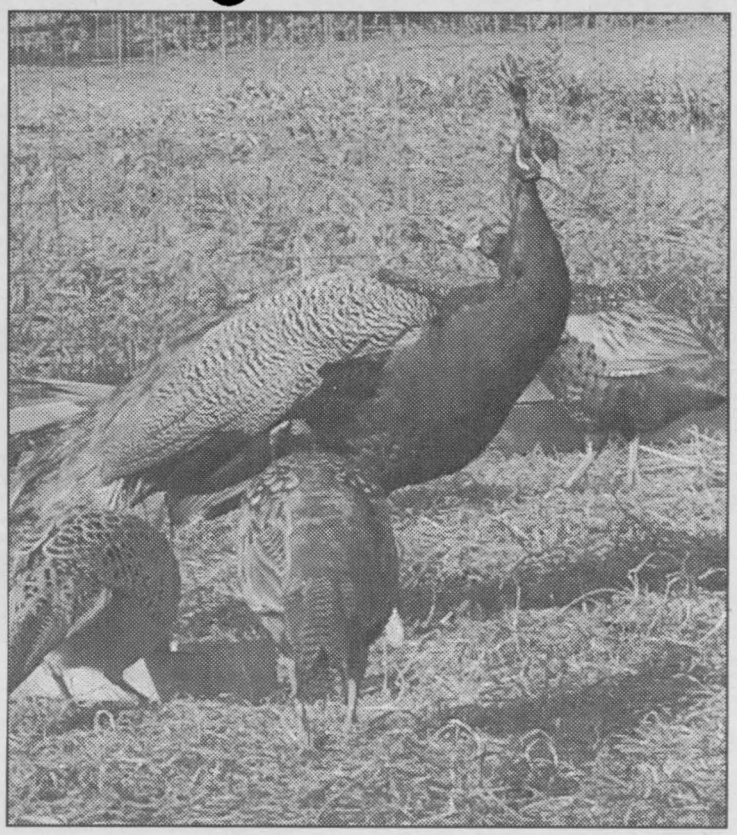
"A feast for the poor people, you know Pheasants for the peasants", says Janice as we discuss eating the birds. The White Guineas have the lightest meat, it is said that white meat equals light meat, the feathers leave no marks in the meat. The female has bigger breasts and so juicier meat, and birders prefer to serve a "brace of meat" which is one hen and one cock at a meal.

As we conclude the interview we retire to the kitchen for tea. Looking out the picture window from the table area, the doves and red golden present a marvellous scene. This sure must be wonderful in the winter when snow adds it sparkle to the scenery. The birds perch on the branches of a leafless tree in the corner of the wire gazebo, storybook style. This is perhaps the start of another product, as the projection for next year includes tours, where mini-gazebos will house different breeds that will be on view. "We belong to the Seaway Valley Farm Network, and have been asked about tours, so perhaps next year we'll give it a try," says Janice as we bid oneanother adieu.



Janice Leslie gently holds a Quail.

Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston



One Proud Peacock at Leslie's Game Birds.

Chieftain Photo by S.L.Johnston

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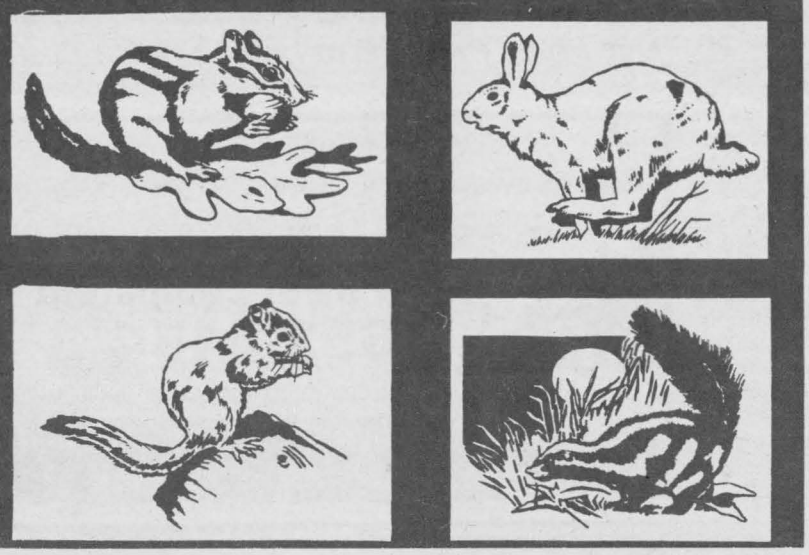
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