

## Custom Carts For Mini Horses

Kelly Miller and Patty Kramps don't sell any off-the-shelf miniature horse carts. Each one is custom made for the size of the horse and driver. In just a couple of years the Canadian entrepreneurs have created a successful business in a niche market.

"When we did our research, according to U.S. agriculture statistics the largest growing segment was driving miniature horses," Kramps says. "About 90 percent of our market is middle-aged women."

The couple owns 22 ponies, and their business, Patty's Pony Place, targets carts for horses that are 34 in. or shorter. They first discovered the market when they imported carts from China and quickly sold out. With Miller's experience building heavy horse vehicles and automotive suspension, they decided to build their own carts.

"He is so particular about his design. He builds his own wheels and the suspension is lightweight," Kramps says. A low center of gravity adds stability, and customers appreciate the comfortable ride in carts with suspension.

"One of our biggest selling points is

safety," she adds. "The carts have inside wheel guards so feet can't slide in the wheel spokes."

Miller builds several models in 2 and 4-wheel versions from \$950 for the basic Grasshopper to \$4,700 for a 4-wheel Mini B with all the bells and whistles for horses taller than 34 in.

Kramps explains that the shafts on a 4-wheeler float, so there is no weight on the horse's back. While some customers purchase carts for their own leisure or to take children for a ride, some use them in competition. The Cricket cart is full CDE (Combined Driving Event) ready and is the most lightweight on the market. It's also quickly becoming very popular, Kramps says.

Miller recently built an expandable, slide-out axle for a cart to meet 41-in. wide CDE requirements. By pulling pins and pushing the wheels in, the cart narrows to 36-in. wide to fit between pillars on the trail the customer uses for recreational driving.

Other modifications have included foldable seats so the cart fits under a pickup canopy, groom packages, brakes, steel spoke wheels with solid rubber tires, and a variety of other



Photo courtesy of Kevin Flynn

**Patty's Pony Place sells miniature carts for horses that are 34 in. or shorter. Each cart is custom-made for the size of the horse and driver.**

options.

Patty upholsters the sets with quality marine-grade vinyl and high-density foam. The business also sells harnesses. Patty provided measurements of miniature horses to a harness-maker in India to ensure the polypropylene webbing harnesses fit correctly.

Patty's Pony Place ships to Canada and the

U.S. Check out the website for photos and videos of available models and options.

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## Rescue Service Floats Cows To Their Feet

Equipment to save downed cows by floating them in warm water has been around for a while. The Danish-built Aqua Cow Riser System was introduced in the U.S. in the early 1990's. Steve Kraak uses the equipment as part of a full-blown cow rehab service, Aqua Lift, run from his Monticello, Wis., farm.

Instead of using the Aqua Cow Riser system at his clients' farms, he transports their downed cows to his facility. "I spend a couple hours a day with each cow," he says.

The Aqua Cow Riser trailer is filled with warm water (minimum of 700 gal.) to get the cow back on its feet while only bearing about 25 percent of its body weight. Most operators keep a cow in the trailer for 4 to 6 hrs., but Kraak averages 18 to 24 hrs.

"I can save more cows with one long float rather than having to repeat it a second time," says Kraak. After 17 years floating cows and 20 years working in dairy nutrition, he has plenty of experience.

After a session in a heated barn, the cow is turned out on a sand pack floor, which has

the best footing and bedding for a recovering cow.

Within a couple of days, cows downed by milk fever or those having trouble calving are usually ready to go home. They have the best success rate - 70 and 80 percent, respectively.

Cattle that have fallen and sustained leg injuries can be more difficult to save and usually take longer, up to 1 1/2 weeks, and longer in some cases.

"I have had one cow 2 1/2 months that can walk, but drags her hind leg, that is carrying a valuable heifer," Kraak says.

Cost for the initial float runs \$280 to \$300. "To me, any cow that has a chance to survive, we should try," he notes.

Summer has traditionally been his busiest time with 30 to 50 cows a month requiring treatment. But winter work has greatly increased since he started working in his heated barn, and Kraak has many beef producer clients in the fall and spring with cows having calving issues.

Using a flotation tank rather than slings and older techniques is growing in popularity with producers and veterinarians.



**Steve Kraak operates a cow rehab service from his Wisconsin farm. Instead of using the Aqua Cow Riser System at his clients' farms, he transports their downed cows to his facility.**

"Floating is the most humane way to deal with a down cow," Kraak says.

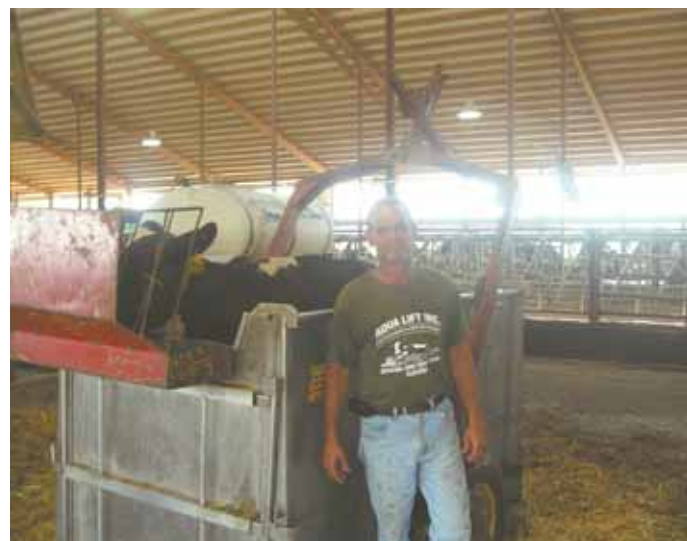
But, he notes, it doesn't save every animal, such as a cow with a dislocated hip, for example. He asks producers several questions to determine if flotation is worth trying. Typically, Kraak travels up to 60 to 70 miles to pick up animals, but will travel farther for additional mileage fees.

Most of his charges are bovine, but Kraak adds that he has worked with horses, buffalo and one elephant. Despite renting a dumpster

to float a 7,900-lb. elephant and getting her to stand, the 49-year-old elephant didn't survive, he says.

"No two cases are ever the same," he says. He finds the work satisfying, especially when he successfully revives a cow or figures ways to improve his rehab services.

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**Aqua Cow Riser trailer saves downed cows by floating them in warm water. It was introduced to the U.S. in the early 1990's.**

## Simple Invention Turned Into 80,000 Sales

Carmen Fedele, Sr. worked in a truck maintenance shop back in the mid 1990's keeping a fleet of trucks in good repair, which often required repairing or replacing wheel seals. "Back then we didn't have a tool other than a sledge and pry bar to knock the seal out," Fedele says. "Eventually the seal came out, but it was difficult and the bearing could easily be damaged."

One evening Fedele went home and started thinking there had to be a better way. "I had a couple pieces of 1/2 by 1-in. scrap metal in my shop and I used a hacksaw to cut a piece about 4 in. long, sharpened one edge and bent it slightly so it would hook behind the seal." Fedele then welded a metal bar perpendicular to the hook for a handle. He tried the puller on a few seals the next day and it worked exactly as he thought it would.

Fedele's invention was so simple and effective that he had the idea patented in 1995. In 2 years he made more than 1,500 in his shop and sold them himself. "I had a band



**Puller tool is designed to knock out wheel seals on trucks.**

saw set up with jigs to cut the parts, and I bought the handles 100 at a time," Fedele says.

Fedele eventually sold the manufacturing rights to a company that's now owned by SKF Tools. "They still make the tool nearly 20 years later the same way I designed it," says Fedele. "The tool works on most tractor, truck, dolly or trailer wheel seals. I guess the idea was a good one, because about 80,000 have been sold over the years."

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