

PHOTOS BY BERNADINE HUGHES/CORRESPONDENT

A BULL IS TURNED on its side in a table waiting for its hooves to be trimmed. The photos below show a cow's hoof, before and after, being trimmed.

Young entrepreneur finds need back in Nebraska

Hoof Man Inc. founded by former Marine

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EWING — Have you ever heard of a cow getting a pedicure?

Neither had 34-year-old Jason Stamp of rural Ewing until a few years ago when, with a lot of determination, commitment and hard work, he became one of only six professional dairy cow hoof trimmers in Nebraska.

"I have always enjoyed working with cattle," he said.

Stamp began milking cows on the family farm near Inman when he was 8. He attended high school in Ewing and milked cows all during his high school years.

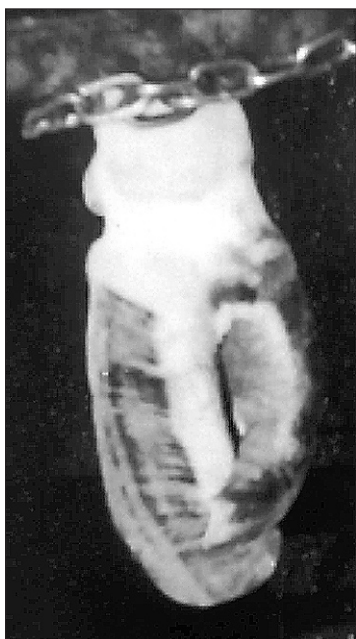
Five days after he graduated from high school in 1990, he joined the Marines. He married the former Jill Sisson of Ewing in 1992 and served in the Marines until 1994.

"When I got out of the Marines, we moved to Geneva," he said, "trying to decide what we should do.

They ended up in St. Cloud, Minn., working at several dairies.

"One day the herdsman came in and said, 'Start picking out cows that need their hoofs trimmed. The hoof trimmer is coming tomorrow.' I laughed at him. I had never heard of a hoof trimmer. We never did that in Nebraska, as the cows were outside on the sand, and if they walked around enough they didn't need it," Stamp said.

Stamp said he decided hoof trimming was something he'd like to try.



After a lot of research, Stamp found a hoof trimming school in Wisconsin, which lasted five days. The cost was \$1,800.

"We didn't have any money," he said, "but we scraped together our last \$1,800 and I went to that school."

HE SUBSEQUENTLY did trimming work in Minnesota and for a Michigan operation that traveled to several states.

In 2000, he decided to go on his own. He bought what's known as a layover chute from a man in Texas and then moved to Ewing. He started Hoof Man Inc.

Stamp drove around Nebraska and picked up clients, then got a list of all the dairy farmers in Nebraska. He drew a circle around 200 of them, sent fliers and began getting calls.

"Cattle are in confinement so much now," he said. "Some people think that since they are on concrete so much they wear their feet down fast, but usually it is the other way around. They are on concrete but don't walk very far.

"A maintenance trim takes approximately three to five minutes," he said. "I trim, short-



en all four hoofs, get the right length, clean out in between the toes and do the bottom. The foot has to be at a 45-degree angle to keep their legs and hips in correct alignment so it doesn't hurt them when they walk."

When the hooves are trimmed, the cows are run into a chute, a stanchion lock comes down on their neck so they can't flop around, bands come up under their belly for support, and they are flipped over on their side.

All the feet are then chained to tighten the bands and the legs are tight. As long as the feet are tied down, with the belt cinched up, they don't have room to kick.

An instrument called a chipper wheel is used for the trimming. It is a grinder that has six little replaceable carbide disks that are changed when the disks gets dull.

Unless there is a problem that has to be treated, the trimming doesn't hurt the cows.

Now Stamp is busy year-round, and spring and fall are the busiest. He currently is booked up through December 2007. He trims more than 10,000 cows a year.