Food Chains On the Jackie Demaster

Sarah Milov

The old home where Chris and Jackie Demaster lived could easily be mistaken for a typical Midwestern farmhouse. Located in a rural community about an hour's drive from Cincinnati in Rockford, Illinois, long before one can see natural the expansive, flat farmlands that surround the property, one can see the farmhouse's distinctive, red-painted, wooden siding. Inside, the house is filled with the kind of knick-knacks and family photos that would typical adorn the walls and shelves of any farmhouse. Chris and Jackie's home is also filled with a variety of pets, including a dog, a cat, and a pair of birds. Yet, the Demaster's home is also home to a variety of other creatures, including a pair of Burmese pythons, a Tiger Salamander, and a variety of other reptiles, amphibians, and insects. Chris and Jackie Demaster are not typical farmers. They are reptile breeders.

An off-hand quote in a small of the world, the first mention of breeding reptiles as a related business venture, sets off a cascade of questions. Why would someone want to breed reptiles? Is there a market for such a business? Is it legal? Is it safe? Is it ethical? Is it sustainable? Is it profitable? Is it a business that can be run from a farmhouse in Illinois? Is it a business that can be run from a farmhouse in Illinois? Is it a business that can be run from a farmhouse in Illinois