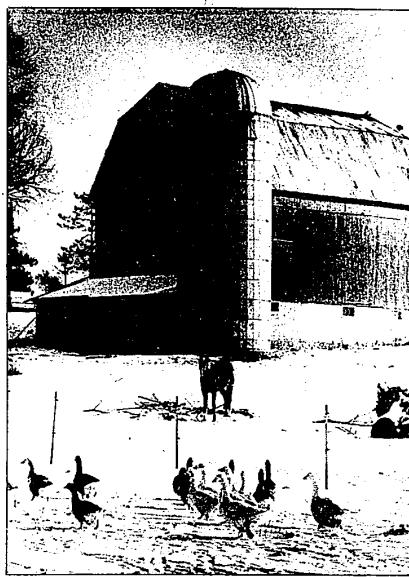




Sheep, out for a run on a winter's day, play follow the leader.



Geese and horses on the Spicer farm keep up their daily routines in spite of winter's rigors.



Eleanor Spicer strikes a reflective pose in the living room of her Farmington Hills home.

## Watching winter's bewitching ways down on the farm

By LOUISE OKRUTSKY

Near modern condominiums but far from the bustle associated with the suburban life style, the Spicer farm gives testimony to a time when Farmington was a rural community.

There was a time when winter was characterized by sheep fattening with early spring lambs and by geese walking across the land to feed on grain. Now only a handful of farms remain to remind Farmington Hills residents of the area's past.

Winter life on the farm goes on at the Spicers.

Watched over by Eleanor Spicer, the remaining geese, horses, chickens and sheep continue the ancient cycles of farm life.

"It's not glamorous. It's work,"

Mrs. Spicer says of her farm.

This year, the lambs will be born in May instead of January since Mrs. Spicer remained undecided over when to purchase a ram.

But the sheep will warm themselves in the bay of the barn bought by Mrs. Spicer and transported to the farm from its original location on Nine Mile and Farmington Road.

BOTH OF THE barns on the Spicer property were transported from other sites.

The large red barn used for the horses was transported from its original location on Eight Mile and Telegraph. It was disassembled and taken to the Spicer farm in three sections.

"It was done at night so they could take the wires down," Mrs. Spicer recalled.

The barn is set on a hill at the center

of a fenced in area for the horses. Of the four horses outside, two are Arabian.

"I rode that one last summer," said Mrs. Spicer pointing to a chestnut brown horse. "She was very gentle and easy."

In the winter, the horses stand and trot outside, little clouds of warm air hovering around their nostrils.

Nearby a gaggle of geese waddle their way across the snow and towards a feeding station. Staying together like conventioneers in a strange city, the geese move back and forth across the yard, squawking at strangers.

Chickens stand in the corner of their fenced off yard hesitantly looking at the snow covered ground. Only one brave chicken soul ventured across the white stuff. Inside the coop, the only rooster peered out of the doorway.

"WHEN WE BOUGHT the chicks the man assured us there weren't any roosters among them," said Mrs. Spicer, eyeing the rooster's large comb which flopped over one side of his head.

The rolling landscape of the Spicer farm reminded her father's groundskeeper of his native Scotland, she said. Years ago, the groundskeeper pronounced the landscape to have hills alike Scotland" and he tended the land with tender care.

But the groundskeeper is gone now and the land around the Spicer property is covered with subdivisions instead of other farms.

"They're ugly," Mrs. Spicer said of the surrounding subdivisions.

"You could put up a condominium in the middle of the desert. But you can't just find land like this," she said.



Farm life, quiet life

Winter settles its mantle on the Spicer home, built by Marcus Burrowes. The 17-door home is one-room wide and based on a mixture of English country and tropical buildings. Against the sheep barn (below), an old-fashioned wooden carousel horse and an ox yoke are warmed by the winter sunlight.

Photos by  
Karl Wellman

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