

Easy-To-Open Gate Latch

Whether you're on a 4-wheeler, a pony or a horse, "The Open Range Gate" latch turns an ordinary gate into one that's no longer an obstacle in your quest for an uninterrupted ride.

The light and durable gate latch is easy to attach, affordable, and fits all widths of tubular iron gates, either new or existing, according to inventor Clint Nesselth of Barron, Wis. After a simple assembly, the two-piece unit bolts into position and forever more means that riders can pass through gates without dismounting.

"You just ride up beside it, lift the hanging handle, and give it a push to open while you ride through. Then you just give it another push to close and it latches automatically," Nesselth says. "Nothing could be easier."

He adds that the heart of the mechanism is

a gate latch that's been used for decades, and there are thousands in use. Nesselth enlarged and improved the existing design and added the hanging handle.

The handle is high enough that livestock can't reach it, and since it requires double action (a lift and a push) the unit is secure from accidental openings.

The latch also has a double tab on it to accept a padlock for off-season security.

"You can buy the Open Range Gate latch from your favorite tack shop, or call us direct, or purchase online," he says.

Nesselth sells the unit for \$59 plus S&H. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Open Range Gate, NTH, Inc., 5 Berger Ave., Barron, Wis. 54812 (ph 800 236 1570; sales @openrangegate.com; www.openrangegate.com).



To open gate you just ride up beside it, lift the hanging handle, and give it a push to open while you ride through. The handle is high enough that livestock can't bump it.

Rare Chinese Deer Have Many Strange Traits

"Pere David's Deer" are a "threatened" species native to China that was once extinct in the wild but is now making a comeback. A sprinkling of private breeders like Cindi Darling of Sparta, Mo., are working to continue increasing the exotic animal's population.

Attempts to describe the deer include many comparisons: they have the neck of a camel, the hooves of a cow, the tail of a donkey and the antlers of a stag.

"Pere David's have a body that's shaped similarly to a donkey, with a tail that ends in a black bush, longer than the tail of any other species of deer," says Darling from her "Liar's Lake Breeding Farm." "They have a long slender neck unlike most other deer, and the head is sometimes described as being like a horse. The hooves make a clicking sound when walking, and the male's uneven antler tines point backwards."

Only the males carry antlers, and they may produce two sets per year, she adds. The coat is reddish tan in summer (with a dark dorsal

stripe), and changes to dark gray in the winter. These animals weigh between 300 and 450 lbs.

Pere David's don't act like other deer, either, according to Darling. They prefer marshland, spending much of their time wading and swimming in the water, and eating water plants, but they will also consume pasture grasses.

"They're so unusual, and with not that many around, it's gratifying to breed them," Darling says. "They're not exactly pretty, sleek or cute, but they are charming to be around and quite calm. I just think they're cool."

When Father Armand David, a naturalist from the west, discovered this Chinese animal in 1865, it had already been wiped out in its natural habitat. The Emperor of China was raising the only remaining animals in his private hunting reserve in the Forbidden City.

Fortunately, he had given a few small groups of the animals to several European



Once near extinction, "Pere David's Deer" are now making a comeback.

countries as gifts because later, when struck with floods and famine, his own captive group perished. The only herd to survive was one in England. It flourished and as a result, in the 1980's, the deer were re-introduced to the wild in China, where they have been re-establishing.

Darling has only recently added Pere David's Deer to her large menagerie of exotic animals, and currently has five. She's expecting more offspring this year.

A much larger herd can be found at

McRoberts Game Farm (www.mcrobertsgamefarm.com) in Nebraska, where 80 head live.

According to Darling, Pere David's Deer sell for an average of about \$1,750 for a weanling and about \$3,000 for mature breeding animals.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Cindi Darling, 1226 Liars Lake Rd., Sparta, Mo. 65753 (ph 417 634-4115; fax 417 634-4072; watusi@liarslake.com); www.liarslake.com).

Use Your Jack To Split Wood

A conventional hi-lift jack can be turned into a great low-cost log splitter, says Tod Stoddard, Durango, Colo., who recently came up with a steel wedge that's designed to bolt onto a jack.

Stoddard's "Running Wild Stump Splitter" consists of a 5-in. long steel wedge that's welded onto a hollow metal bracket. The bracket slips down over the beam of the jack and bolts onto it using existing holes in the beam. The operator places the bottom of the log on the "foot" of the jack and ties the top of the jack to a solid object to keep the jack stable. To split the log he simply pumps the jack handle, which raises the log up against the wedge.

"It's a simple, low-cost way to split logs without any engine fumes or hydraulic hoses or batteries to break down," says Stoddard. "Most handyman jacks are rated to handle three tons of pressure, so you can split logs anywhere from 12 to 30 in. long and up to about 1 1/2 ft. in diameter."

Stoddard uses bucket teeth off old front-end loaders to make the wedges. "The bracket that the wedge is welded to is made from 1/4-in. wall tubing so it'll stand all the strain that your jack can put on it," says Stoddard.

The wedge sells for \$45 including S&H. Stoddard says he's looking for a manufacturer.



Steel wedge is designed to bolt onto a conventional hi-lift jack, turning it into an effective low-cost log splitter.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tod Stoddard, 2217 CR 204, Durango, Colo. 81301 (ph 970 903-3389).

Compact Folding Front Hitch

Moving 60 big hay bales inside - one at a time - late into the night and just barely beating a rain storm convinced Lyndon Dunbar he needed to come up with a faster method. Instead of buying a loader for his tractor, the electrical engineer and part-time farmer decided to build a front hitch that he could fold out of the way when he didn't need it.

"I've used the hitch for two years now, primarily to move large round bales," explains Dunbar, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. "I can move two bales on each trip with one on front and one on back."

With a hydraulic cylinder and other parts on hand, the hitch only cost \$90 to build. The cylinder is mounted on the side of the tractor and pulls a 3/8-in. cable routed across pulleys to raise and lower hitch arms in front of the tractor. With an 8-in. stroke, the hydraulic cylinder provides 14 in. of lift - enough to handle bales.

Dunbar purchased Cat. I hitch arms and a short section of 2 by 2 by 3/8-in. angle iron to build a 3-pt. hitch to support a bale spear. He made and mounted an adapter onto the stationary drawbar of the hitch to support the top link of the 3-pt. hitch. He attached a bracket plate on the side of the tractor to hold the hydraulic cylinder.

"I came up with the design myself," Dunbar says. "The hydraulic hitches that are manufactured are pretty bulky, use a special hydraulic cylinder and you can't fold them up."

Dunbar notes that the compact design works well in his small fields and for negoti-



Lyndon Dunbar's home-built front hitch folds out of the way when not in use.

ating around trees. He can bale his hay, unhook the baler, attach a bale spear to the back, another to the front on his hitch and be back in the field in a short time picking up two bales at a time.

When he doesn't need the bale fork, he removes it, folds up the hitch arms, removes the cylinder and hooks the cable on the cylinder bracket plate to keep the hitch arm in place.

Dunbar noted that he first used 5/16-in. cable, but it snapped. He switched to 3/8-in. cable, changed a sheave size and hasn't had any problems since.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lyndon Dunbar, 713 Third St. SW, Apt. 3, Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52404 (ph 319 364-3769).