

Portable Calf Gazebo Makes Feeding Easy

Calf huts are easy to move to clean ground for healthier calves. However, feeding those calves in bad weather is anything but easy. Now N-Tech/NTH, Inc. has a new option that is good for calf and worker alike. They call it a calf gazebo, or “ca-Z-bo”.

“It’s a round calf barn that sets up quickly and can be moved even quicker,” says Clint Nesselth.

The 20-ft. dia. structure has 7 pens, the 24-ft. dia. structure has 11 pens, and the 32-ft. structure has 22 pens. Each pen is shaped like a piece of pie 5 to 6 ft. wide at the wide end, 7 ft. long and 2 1/2 ft. wide at the center. Space in the center is left for a feeding and working area and one pie space is left empty as an alley for the worker to reach the center work area.

Nesselth got the idea after ordering a 60-ft. dia. enclosed pen for working horses. However, after spending 2 1/2 weeks with a crew to erect the circular pen, he was determined to make his calf barns simple to erect. He succeeded. The key is a center core that serves as both structural hub and ventilation chimney.

“You lay out the central core on the ground and attach steel rafters and braces to the core and in turn hinge legs to the rafters,” explains Nesselth. “The entire frame is assembled on the ground.”

A translucent fabric roof is attached over

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The 24-ft. dia. model has 11 pens. A larger 32-ft. model has 22 pens.



the top along with an adjustable cover to the chimney/core. At that point the approximately one-ton structure can be lifted into place by a boom on a tractor loader.

As the center core is lifted up, the legs swing into place. Bolts lock each leg joint. Pegs are driven in the ground, one to either side of each leg, to lock it in place. Removable panels attach to the legs on the outside and on the inside to form the pens. Side panels that can be raised or lowered as needed.

“To move the structure to fresh ground, just pull out the pegs, hook on the boom, lift it up and go,” says Nesselth. “The pens stay in place.”



Nesselth took prototypes to several farm shows before starting production on a final design. He knew he was on to something when he began getting positive feedback from farm wives who usually do the feeding.

“One guy looked at it and said, ‘I sure hope my wife doesn’t see this’, while others said, ‘I have to get one of these for my wife,’” recalls Nesselth. “We got lots of good suggestions that we worked into the final design.”

Nesselth says the smaller 7-calf unit is priced at about \$4,900, 11-calf unit is priced at about \$7,200 and the 22-calf unit is priced at about \$13,200.

Booms and trailers to move the Gazebo, as well as a special fast-tach fork for cleaning stalls, are available.

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Reader Inquiry No. 77

Guillotine Wood Splitter

No chainsaw is needed with Darrell Inkster’s firewood “guillotine”. The double-edged blade slices through whole trees, cutting them into 16-in. lengths and splitting them at the same time.

“I go through 20 cords of firewood a winter and decided to find a way to make the job easier,” says Inkster. “My wife uses a Bobcat to load logs onto the feeder chain, and I run the shears.”

Everything about the guillotine shears is massive, starting with the log feeding channel. It’s a 28-ft. long, 14-in. wide, 1-in. thick I-beam removed from a nearby bridge when it was rebuilt. To move logs in the 14-in. wide I-beam channel, Inkster used combine feeder chain, cutting down the cross bars to fit.

The cutting blade is 22 in. wide by 16 in. high and 1-in. thick. Recycled from the steel cutting edge of a Caterpillar dozer blade, Inkster says he got it for almost nothing, though he spent around 8 hours grinding the edge razor sharp with a disk grinder.

The splitter blade is a second piece of steel, 6 in. long and also 1-in. thick. One end of the wedge is welded to a 1/4-in. steel plate that is bolted to the shears blade. The wedge has been ground to a sharp edge. The splitting wedge is mounted at the blade’s center point, but about 4 in. up from the blade edge. While only 6 in. long, Inkster says it’s more than enough to split a 16-in. length of log after the shears have done their job.

“Green wood splits clean as a whistle,” says Inkster. “When the blade and wedge hit older, dry wood, they tend to squash the wood fiber, pulverize and then split it.”

To mount the blade, Inkster fabricated a reinforced arch above the output end of the feeder channel. He used sections of 1/4-in. thick, 3 by 4-in. rectangular steel tubing with curved ends. He welded them together at the peak to form a mount for the heavy-duty hydraulic cylinder that drives the blade.

“The curved arch distributes the pressure from the cylinder better than square beams would have,” says Inkster. “I run the cylinder



off a hydraulic pump on my truck. I set the pressure at 2,100 psi, which gives the blade about 40 tons of down pressure.”

“We can process about two cords per hour,” says Inkster. “I can cut and split a chunk every 25 seconds.”

“It goes through 12-in. poplar like nothing,” he says. “The way it’s designed, I can chainsaw logs up to 20-in. diameter, feed them through on end and use it like a normal splitter.”

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