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Engineered Roof Puts Slurrystore Back To Work

Todd Cole turned his old Slurrystore into feed and machinery storage by roofing the 62-ft. dia., 25-ft. tall structure. No longer needed since Cole quit dairying, the manure storage unit had been empty for more than 20 years.

"I thought about tearing it down, but that would have been costly," says Cole. "I needed a commodity shed, and this had a nice cement pad outside. Inside the cement was still perfect, really smooth with no chipping or peeling."

When a carpenter friend suggested he could help him build a roof, Cole went to the local lumber/hardware store. Their engineer-

ing department provided advice and plans. Eventually, he hired a structural engineer to review and finalize the design.

The structural engineer pointed out if the only perimeter support was the Slurrystore walls, it could "kink like a pop can." The roof's 30,000-lb. weight would be too much.

They came up with a plan for 22 rafters joining at the center for a clear span roof. The design included framing in a 15-ft. wide by 16-ft. high doorway.

Additional roof support would be provided by 22 sets of three 25-ft., 2 by 6-in. boards laminated together with nails. These were

bolted to the side of the Slurrystore directly under each of the 22 rafters.

Cole and his carpenter friend used a scissor lift and a telehandler to put the clear span beams in place. The roof peaks at 37 ft. in the center with a vent between each rafter near the top of the building. An old Pax bulk feed roof painted black was set at the peak.

"It cost an extra \$1,800 to install the clear span roof, but it was worth it for access to the entire floor space," says Cole. "The entire project cost a little more than \$40,000."

The only drawback, he says, is excess heat in the summer. He is considering adding win-

dows for increased ventilation to help with that in the future.

"Looking at the cost of a new building plus concrete, I know I came out ahead," he says. "This holds my tub grinder, feed wagon and skid loader, as well as ingredients for mixing for one to two days."

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Raised Beds Eliminate Need For GPS

GPS receivers and auto steering aren't needed to get precision planting and weed control with this new raised bed equipment from Duragro. Once the Bedformer makes the beds, planting, cultivating, spraying and other tasks can be carried out within a centimeter or less accuracy. John Klassen, Duragro, tried the equipment out last year before starting to market it this past winter.

"Once the beds were formed, putting skis on the front and rear of planters or other equipment locks it into position," says Klassen. "We were able to cultivate within an inch of the plant row. You can mount a sprayer to the same spacing on the toolbar as the planter was and spray a 2-in. band over a row."



The Bedlocker is a toolbar with two sets of Teflon-surfaced skis. Skis lock toolbar-mounted equipment to bed sides for precision planting or cultivating.

Anyone who has ever gardened using raised beds can confirm higher yields, reduced weeds and labor, and improved soil tilth and drainage. What this equipment does is to mechanize the process for market gardeners and intensive specialty crop producers. A vegetable producer can farm a hundred acres in the time he could manage an acre or less in the past.

"We can form beds on 2 1/2 acres in an hour with a single bed Bedformer," says David McGrath, the Australian developer of the equipment. "With a higher horsepower tractor and a triple bed Bedformer, we can set up beds on 100 acres per day."

Equipment being offered by Duragro includes the Bedformer, Bedlocker and the pot-powered Weeder. All three pieces are

3-pt. hitch mounted. The Bedformer can be equipped to rip or plow the field and form beds in a single pass using twin front toolbars. Bed size can be adjusted to match wheel width of available tractors. It's priced at \$7,500 for the basic unit.

The Bedlocker is a toolbar with two sets of Teflon surfaced skis that lock toolbar-mounted equipment to the bed sides for uniform spacing. The first set of skis is mounted to the toolbar, with the second set available to lock the rear end of equipment to the bed sides for added precision. Using the double sets of skis, seed placement can be within 1/5th inch of the surface. The Bedlocker toolbar with skis is priced at \$4,000.

The powered Weeder floats within a "ski" guided frame. It uses oscillating knife action to chip under the surface, lift and dislodge weeds within less than an inch of the plant. Like the Bedlocker, the Weeder is equipped with two sets of skis to maintain blade spacing around planted rows. Blade working width, depth and angle can be adjusted to changing bed or crop conditions. Clamps can restrict knife movement or be partially or totally removed for either or both vertical and/or horizontal movement. The Weeder is ideal for organic growers as it allows for up to 90 percent weed control with no herbicides used. It's priced at \$17,500.

Klassen says additional raised bed equipment is being added to the lineup, including attachments such as a drip irrigation tape applicator. "The Bedrenovator reverse tills all crop refuse and buries it 6 in. below the surface," says Klassen. "It leaves an ideal seeding surface and reforms the bed in one pass."

Klassen says pricing for the Bedrenovator and the drip tape applicator will be available later this year.

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A machine called the Bedformer makes raised beds, allowing planting, cultivating, spraying and other tasks to be carried out with precision.



Skis mounted on front and back of cultivator has the sides of raised beds to allow precision work.

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