

5-Ft. Round Baler Cut Down To 4-Ft.

Charles Axelson, Finlayson, Minn., bought a used Vermeer 605 C round baler and used it for a year to make standard 5-ft. wide bales. Then his hay buyers started asking him for 4-ft. bales.

"Many local horse owners have 8-ft. trailers, so they can haul two rows of 4-ft. wide bales without worrying about having an oversize load. I didn't want to spend the money for a new baler, so I converted the 5-ft. model I already had to make 4-ft. bales," says Axelson.

He removed all the bale-forming belts, belt guides and rollers from the bale chamber. The bottom rollers are designed to work "in time" so he used a center punch to mark the top center before he pulled them out. He also unbolted the pickup.

With the rollers pulled, he used threaded rod and flat iron to hold the baler's walls in place. He jacked the baler up and put a roller under each side of the axle. Then he used a cutting torch to cut 1 ft. out of the center of the axle. Then a come-along was used to draw the right side of the baler over to the left.

Once the walls were square, he pulled the 2 parts of the axle together and braced them with angle iron and threaded rod.

He cut off part of the tongue on each side of the baler's main frame to narrow it up, then pulled the frame in and welded a 1/4-in. thick plate onto it. He also slid the baler's main brace back and welded a 1/4-in. thick steel plate onto it.

He cut 12 in. off all the roller shafts and roller tubes and welded them back together. He cut the belt guide down to 48 in., put a rod inside, and welded it on.

The final step was to reassemble all the belts, rollers and guides.

"I think you could make this conversion on any baler. And you don't need fancy equipment to do the job," says Axelson. "I used a bandsaw in my garage to cut all the tubes and shafts. I also used an old 180-amp welder and a set of cutting torches. Pioneer Machine Shop in Aitkin, Minn., helped me with some of the rollers."

Blueprints and photos of the process are available for a fee.

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With all the bale-forming belts, belt guides and rollers removed from the bale chamber, Axelson used threaded rod and flat iron to hold the baler's walls in place.



He cut 12 in. off the roller tubes before welding them back together.

Drop-In Turbo Boosts Semi Diesel Power

Diesel drivers looking for more power from their big rigs should check out the C-15 twin-to-single turbo conversion kit from Big Rig Power. The Edmonton, Alberta company says its single turbo kit produces 17 to 18 hp. per lb. of boost while the OEM Acert twin produces only 11 to 12 hp. per lb. of boost. The kit is ideal for 2004-2007 Freightliner, Kenworth, Peterbilt and International rigs equipped with Acert C-15 Cat engines.

Big Rig says the twin-to-single conversion

can show improved fuel mileage, more power and lower maintenance. You can also expect faster spool-up and eliminate what drivers often call the "twin-turbo time bomb." The conversion kit includes a Bully Dog exhaust manifold that the company says is much stronger than the stock piece. It has a thicker casting and extra ribbing. Air flow is 20 percent higher, which can add 30 hp. Ceramic coating inside and out improves heat dispersion and increases longevity. Each turbo is balanced to 180,000 rpm. The

turbo has an aluminum-forged compressor wheel that spins on copper journal bearings so the turbo can build pressure as quickly as possible.

The kit includes all components for the conversion, including oil lines, an intake elbow and turbo studs. Big Rig says the key to improved performance with a single turbo is the Bully Dog Heavy Duty Gauge Tuner (HDGT) programmer. This system tunes the electronic control module so there's no need to change any harnesses, injectors or

relays. The tuning experts at Big Rig can custom tailor software for different engines to ensure operators get the power setup they need directly tuned to the ECM system. The HDGT can also be updated by internet access regardless of where a truck is located.

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Bringing Back The Iowa Blue Breed

Most people have never heard of or seen an Iowa Blue chicken, but a few breeders are working to change all that. They're selectively breeding and selling eggs, chicks and hens as fast as they can supply them to anyone interested in helping to preserve the nearly 100-year-old breed.

A true Iowa Blue has slate-colored legs and feathers that glow with a blue iridescent sheen on a unique white-laced pattern, says Connie Hurley, a fan of the colorful chickens she "discovered" in 2011. Initially the Iowa native was attracted to them in part because of their name. But their traits also match exactly what she was looking for.

"They're good free rangers, they're gorgeous, and I really want to support the breed," she says. "The females really shine; they're the prettiest. And the roosters are very majestic, proud and hardy."

While she has lost a couple of other chicken breeds due to Wisconsin's summer heat and humidity, the Iowa Blue flock thrives in both the heat and Wisconsin's frigid winters.

She's been impressed with the breed's awareness of predators, such as hawks, and how a rooster fights to defend its flock. The birds free range during the day and stay in a coop at night for protection from fox and other predators.

While they fight predators, the roosters are friendly and good around people - even children.

"They're active and animated and don't do well in close confinement, preferring to free

range. They're a little more wild (than other breeds)," Hurley says, noting that the chicks hatch out active and "pop up with a gamey attitude".

That trait might be traced back to the bird's ancestry. The legend is that in the early 1920's, John Logsdon, a Decorah, Iowa, farmer who loved to experiment, successfully bred a Chinese cock pheasant with a Black Minorca hen and a Rhode Island hen.

However the bird was bred, it was an ideal homestead bird that provided both eggs and meat for the table. The Iowa Blue breed nearly went extinct several times as commercial egg layer breeds dominated the market. Hurley credits conservationists such as Sand Hill Preservation Center for keeping the breed going.

Some characteristics such as size, coloring and egg quality have diminished, however. At the end of 2012, several Iowa Blue breeders organized the Iowa Blue Chicken Club to research and record the history, and to selectively breed back size and other characteristics. Hurley, who serves as secretary for the group, says members have made good gains in a short time. She has been busy dispersing Iowa Blue eggs and chicks at affordable prices to many of her Wisconsin neighbors.

Iowa Blue chickens fit the needs of people interested in raising small backyard flocks for eggs and meat. And with their lustrous plumage, unique pattern and proud, showy attitude, they're gaining popularity at shows,



Colorful Iowa Blue chickens have slate-colored legs and feathers that glow with a blue iridescent sheen on a unique, white-laced pattern.

Hurley says.

She suggests that anyone interested in the breed check out the club's website, www.iowabluechickenclub.com and join in the Iowa Blue discussion thread on www.backyardchickens.com.

backyardchickens.com.

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