Made It Myself

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Photo courtesy Town & Country, Westlock, Alberta

Hay-Saving Feeder Shed Keeps Round Bales Covered

"My round bale feeder shed keeps hay waste to a minimum," says Peter Kuelken, Fort Assiniboine, Alberta, who designed a unique hay-saving "inverted hopper" bale feeder that's built inside its own pole shed to protect bales and livestock from the weather.

The shed is 20 ft. long, 21 ft. wide and 9 1/2 ft. high at the peak with 8 ft., 6 in. of clearance inside. The feeder itself is 7 ft. wide and runs down the center of the shed. It holds five round bales and has room to feed 30 cows at a time. To load bales into the feeder, Kuelken opens a door on one end and uses a front-end loader to push bales in endwise onto two rails at the top of the inverted V-shaped hopper. The bales fit snugly between two horizontally-mounted 3-in. dia. pipes spaced 1 ft. in from either side of the feeder.

"This shed and feeder combination wastes far less hay than conventional round bale feeders," says Kuelken, who designed and built his first feeder four years ago and has since built another 20-ft. long, 4-bale model.

There's a 5-ft. roof overhang on either side of the feeder. Kuelken says if he could do it over, he'd make a wider roof with an 8-ft. overhang to keep rain and snow completely off cows' backs.

Kuelken spent about $600 to build the feeder.

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Combine "Straw Chopper" Chops Stalks Behind Corn Picker

"An old straw chopper removed from a Deere 30 combine, mounted on wheels and pulled upside down behind my 2-row corn picker, works great to chop stalks as I pick corn," says David Gergen, Granville, Iowa.

Gergen mounted the 53-in. wide straw chopper inside a frame made from 3-in. sq. tubing and equipped with wheels from a Kools silo blower. He fastened 8-in. long flaps made from rubber belting on the rear and sides of the chopper to reduce dust. A gearbox salvaged from an Owatonna windrower mounts on the picker to drive the straw chopper via a 160-in. drive belt that runs from a 12-in. pulley on the gearbox to a 9-in. pulley on the straw chopper. The gearbox mounts inside a frame which is welded to the picker's axle, just ahead of the husking bed. Two 9-in. pulleys from a New Idea 315 corn sheller mounted on the back of the gearbox run side by side, each driving a 72-in. belt running off the main gearbox. A 3-in. flat pulley with two bearings lifts the large belt over the axle and under the husking bed. Three bolts attach the straw chopper itself to brackets welded onto the back of the 8-row husking bed of his New Idea 324 corn picker.

"The straw chopper is activated when I engage the pto to power the corn picker. The knives run at about 2,500 rpms," says Gergen. "I used this home-built stalk chopper on 100 acres of corn this fall, pulling it with a Deere 4010 tractor and it worked great, even on green stalks. The only problem was that it missed some of the low, bent over stalks. If I did it again I might reverse the straw chopper so the knives rotate backward instead of forward to pick up these stalks."

Gergen spent about $300 to build the straw chopper.

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"Tilting Quick Hitch"

"My tilting quick hitch lets you tilt 3-pt. mounted implements to one side or the other and it also makes hookup easy, especially on uneven ground," says Fred Kestrl, New Lenox, Ill. about the hitch he built three years ago.

A hydraulic cylinder on the left side of the quick hitch frame moves the hitch's left side up or down. To build the unit, Kestrl welded an 8-in. arm to the lower right conventional hitch point. He bolted a hinging 8-in. arm to the left hitch point. It bends at the point where the hydraulic cylinder attaches to it. He also extended the top link 8 in.

"If my field cultivator 'planes' one way or the other, I can adjust the cylinder to level it. Or, if there's a ridge along a fence and I don't want the cultivator to dig in, I'll just tip one side of the cultivator a little," says Kestrl, adding that the hitch also eliminates the need to preset the depth of cultivator shovels or to adjust the cultivator's hitch. "You can do all that on-the-go by adjusting the cylinder. It makes it easier to keep the cultivator running level and that means the shovels will last longer and pull easier."

The tilting hitch also works great to level a moldboard plow, according to Kestrl. "Before I built this hitch the plow often dug in on one side or the other. Now I can keep it level so it pulls easier and wears more evenly." He adds that the unit even makes it possible to use a moldboard plow to terrace, because it'll tip the plow to throw dirt deep or shallow.

The hitch also works well with a grader blade. "I use it to flop one side of the blade up or down while cutting ditches or grading roads. You can buy commercial blades equipped with this feature, but they're expensive."

Kestrl says the patented hitch adapts easily to various tractor models. He's currently looking for a manufacturer.

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Grain-Driven Bin Distributor

"My grain-driven bin distributor lets me spread grain in level layers without shoveling and for less cost than any commercial electric distributor," says D. Junior Stoesz, Butterfield, Minn.

Stoesz' distributor, which he built for his 42-ft. bin, consists of a 14-ft. long, 8-in. wide trough with 4-in. high sides. The trough is connected to the bottom of a vertical 18-in. long, 11-in. dia. pipe that swivels freely inside a 12-in. dia. pipe mounted inside the bin's top opening. The last 18 in. of the trough is offset 8 in. to the left. Grain drops through the pipe and down the trough. The force of the grain hitting the spout's offset section causes the spout to rotate.

"We naturally bin-dry all of our corn in layers, so it's important to distribute corn evenly all the way around the bin," says Stoesz. "Commercial electric distributors, which cost about $500, often pile corn unevenly. Grain may be 2 ft. higher on one side of the bin than the other. Shoveling is the only way to even it out. My distributor doesn't always distribute grain perfectly level, either. But if one side of a fresh layer is too low, I simply grab a rope hanging from the counterweight to stop the spout from rotating and direct corn to the low area."

A vertical bar extends 10 ft. below the main pipe. A moveable scissor framework, which slides up and down on the bar, supports both the trough and a counterweight. From the bin's top opening, Stoesz can raise or lower the spout 10 ft. with a rope that attaches to the framework. Lowering the spout causes it to throw grain in a smaller circle. "Another advantage of my distributor is that it directs a steady stream of grain to one area, unlike electric distributors that throw it out across a wide area, so that there's less grain damage and compaction making it easier to dry grain," notes Stoesz.

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