

## He Uses Pickup To Create Picture Perfect Rows

Global Positioning Systems can lay arrow-straight paths across fields, but they also lay a path to your bank account. Bruce Wichmann, a Fairfax, Minn., farmer found a less technical and less expensive way to lay out perfectly straight rows.

Wichmann farms in south central Minnesota, a land of flat black fields that seem to go on for miles. He and his neighbors have, wherever possible, eliminated fence rows. Starting a field with straight rows is tough enough when you have a field edge to go by, but in Wichmann's country, it's even tougher.

"When I was making that first shot across the field, I was always turning around, checking the rear and then getting off line. With my pick-up mounted starter marker, I just take aim at a distant fence post and head straight across the field," says Wichmann.

The row marker unit is simplicity at its finest. Wichmann simply cut a length of 1 1/2-in. sq. tubing to run from his pickup hitch to a point just beyond the 13 ft. mark, on about half the width of the planter.

Wichmann mounted a single Danish tooth at the end of the marker to form the row mark. A used 6-in. lawn mower wheel mounts at the end of the tubing to become both a depth gauge and a carrier for the Danish tooth. Chain runs from the end of the marker to a hook on the front bumper of the pickup.



Marker unit consists of a shank attached to a length of sq. tubing. A small wheel serves as a depth gauge. Chain runs from end of marker to pickup's front bumper.

When Wichmann is ready to start planting a field, he simply extends the marker and hangs his head out the window to sight on the far corner of the field. The Danish tooth cuts a furrow 6-in. deep, straight and true to the other end of the field, for the planter operator to follow. No more zigs or zags to smooth out during successive passes.

"It's easier to make a straight mark with the pickup because you're only doing one thing. Then when you're planting, you don't have to sight to the end," says Wichmann. "All you have to do is follow the planter mark."

Having straight and uniform rows is



Wichmann uses a row marker unit behind his pickup to make a perfectly straight furrow, which he then follows with his planter as he opens the field.

especially important to Wichmann. After updating his combine to a 6-row 30-in. header, he converted an 8-row 36-in. 7000 into a 10-row 30-in. wide planter. The combination requires uniformity, but the cost savings were impressive compared to buying a new narrow 12-row planter.

"I readjusted wheel spacing, hung on two new planter units with disk openers for fertilizer and four new hydraulic hoses,"

recalls Wichmann. "I also converted an 8-row double ganged cultivator to a 10-row single gang unit. Converting from 36 to 30-in. cost me about \$1,500 compared to buying a used 12-row in decent shape for \$10,000-\$12,000. I just have to stay straighter on my planting."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bruce Wichmann, 69245 520<sup>th</sup> St., Fairfax, Minn. 55332; (ph 507 426-8175; E-mail: graywolf@prairie.lakes.com).

## Simple Hydraulic "Scale" Accurately Weighs Baled Hay

No matter how careful Joe Pattie is when making big round bales, they often vary in weight by as much as 200 lbs.

"That makes a big difference when you're trying to feed an exact amount of hay to cattle," says the Harrison, Arkansas cattleman.

Pattie would often borrow an electronic scale from his county extension office to weigh bales. That was a bit of a hassle and he couldn't weigh every bale. What he really needed was a scale he could use as he fed the bales.

After a little thought, Pattie devised just what he needed at a cost of less than \$200.

The scale works together with his 3-pt. mounted bale unroller. He started by replacing the manually adjusted top link with a hydraulic top link. Instead of plugging the cylinder into a hydraulic outlet, though, Pattie filled it with hydraulic fluid and then plugged it by running the hose into a 600 psi pressure gauge.

As a bale exerts pressure on the top link, the pressure reading on the gauge will change.

To calibrate his scale, Pattie weighed several bales on a reliable electronic scale and then picked them up with his bale unroller. Then he'd take a pressure gauge reading, unroll hay, take another pressure gauge reading and then put the bale on the scale again.

"We kept doing this until we finally had a

chart to convert pounds of pressure to pounds of hay," he says.

"The biggest investment in developing the scale was the time it took to make up a calibration table," Pattie adds. The table hangs from the cab window.

Pattie made the hydraulic hose on the scale long enough to mount the gauge where he can easily read it from the cab.

He notes that you might not need the hydraulic top link to make a hydraulic pressure gauge scale. "On some tractors, particularly older ones, the hydraulic lines to the 3-point hitch are accessible. If you could put a T into that line, you could get your pressure reading directly from the amount of pressure it takes to lift the bale," he says.

Being able to weigh bales has given Pattie better control of his feed use and costs. He says his hay is worth from 3 to 5 cents per pound, which means that every 10 lbs. of hay per day in excess of what the cattle actually need costs him \$36 to \$60. He figures the scale saves plenty of money.

"You need to be able to feed as much as the cattle need without underfeeding or overfeeding by too much," he says. "This takes a lot of the guesswork out of feeding hay."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Joe Pattie, 722 E. South Avenue, Harrison, Arkansas 72601 (ph 870 436-5869; E-mail: jpattie@leadhill.net).



Pattie's weigh scale mounts on 3-pt. bale unroller. He filled the top link hydraulic cylinder with fluid and then ran a hose into a 600 psi pressure gauge. Bale exerts pressure on top link, which affects pressure reading.



Pattie can easily read pressure gauge with a quick glance out back window of tractor cab.



Chart in tractor cab is used to convert pounds of pressure to pounds of hay.

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