

Header Reconditioning Business Grew From Part-Time Hobby

Saskatchewan grain farmer Ed Lorenz fixed up a few combine headers to resell about 20 years ago.

"At the time, it was more of a hobby, just to keep busy in the off season," he says. But it wasn't long before neighbors and even people he didn't know were ringing his phone and knocking on his door looking for a good reconditioned header.

Today, he keeps from two to six workers busy year-round at his Paradise Hill, Saskatchewan, shop, tearing down, fixing up and reassembling headers which he then sells all over Canada and the U.S. "We like to have at least a hundred headers all ready to go in advance of the busy grain harvest season, and by the time it's over, we're usually down to just a handful," he says.

Lorenz has no trouble finding headers to recondition. "We take trade-ins from farmers who buy a reconditioned head from us. But most of the ones we get come from dealers. A lot of Canadian and U.S. dealers know we'll buy used headers that need work, but can be put back into working condition," he says.

Several auctioneers conducting overstock used equipment auctions also notify him if there are a lot of headers to be sold at one place.

"We usually try to find at least 10 headers in one area so we can haul them home eco-

nomically," he says.

Before headers are loaded to be shipped to Lorenz, they're partially disassembled in order to get as many as possible on a truck.

"We take off the reels and divider points and other parts. When they arrive here, we clean them the best we can so there's no dirt and no weed seed left in them. We spin the augers to make sure they run true. From there, we put on all new guards and sections if they need them. We replace worn bearings, sprockets, chains, auger finger guides, and anything else needed to get it as close to new condition as possible," he says. "Then we make sure all the protective shields are in place."

Once they're mechanically sound, most headers are sanded down and given a new coat of paint.

Lorenz says while they want the header to be as close to new as possible, they also want to keep the cost to the farmer as low as possible, too. So no repairs are made or parts replaced that aren't needed.

Finally, once a header is ready for sale, he brands it by putting his own sticker on. "We've been doing this long enough we're seeing our stickers on headers coming in for trade or from dealers," he says.

Lorenz says he works mostly with Case-IH and John Deere platform headers. "We can restore any make of header, though, and



Lorenz buys used headers and puts them back into working condition.

from the smallest platform up to 30 footers," he says. "We do flex and rigid headers, with bat reels, pickup reels, or no reels," he adds. "We even do the occasional draper header, although most are auger feed."

In addition to reconditioning headers, he also makes header trailers to make it easier

for his customers to handle their headers.

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"Recycled" Garbage Bins Make Great Hay Feeders

When Cecil Whitehead, Margarettsville, North Carolina, heard North Hampton county was discontinuing its county-wide recycling collections and the used bins would be given to anyone who had a use for them, it didn't take him long to come up with a plan to recycle a few.

With a small cattle business, Whitehead wanted a less wasteful way to feed hay than round bale feeders or putting it on the ground.

"I'd tried several methods and was not satisfied with any of them," he says. "The biggest problems were the hay got wet and became a less desirable feed, and secondly, a lot of hay that cattle pulled out of the bales fell out of the rack and was stomped into the mud."

Whitehead has now turned two of the old recycling bins into hay feeding racks that he can move from site to site and, best of all, "there's very little wasted feed," he says.

The bins he converted are cubes that measure about 6 ft wide, 6 ft. from front to back, and are 78 in. high at the back, sloping to 48 in. at the front, with open tops. "They're really solid, made of 12 or 14 gauge steel on the sides, with heavier 10 gauge steel on the bottoms," he says.

His first step in making the hay feeders was to turn the bin on its front side and then square up what was now the bottom by adding an angle iron frame and covering it with sheet metal. With this, he extended the new bottom to about 70 in., so he has an 8-in. overhang at the top.

He built a 52 1/2-in. tall gate of 1 1/2-in. round steel pipe, cut and welded at the corners, that fits across what had been the open top of the box. Two feet up from the bottom of the gate, he added a crossbar of 1 1/2-in. pipe all the way across. The bottom 2 ft. of the gate is covered over with 2-in. sq. mesh, 5/16-in. wire panel that he welded in place.

Above the wire mesh, he divided the 6 ft.

long gate into three headgates by putting in two upright pipes about 22 in. apart. He made hinges to mount the gate to the trash bin out of 1 by 1/2-in. heavy steel tubing. He welded the hinges to the bin so the gate closes flush and used bolts for hinge pins so it would swing freely. He made two gate latches from the same material to mount to the other side and uses steel pins to secure the gate when it's closed.

He wanted more than three animals to be able to eat from the feeder, so he cut three holes in what is now the 6-ft. long side opposite his gate (that had been the bottom of the bin) and one each in what had been the ends of the bin. That gave him openings for eight cattle. He used angle iron and pipe to frame the holes he cut in the solid steel, so there were no sharp edges to cut or scrape the animals.

To keep the feeders up off the ground, he mounted them on railroad ties. He uses a fork lift to move the feeders from site to site.

"I just swing the gate open and slide a big round bale in with the loader on my tractor's three-point hitch," he says. "It keeps all the hay inside and out of the weather, and the strings don't get strewn all over the pasture, either."

Both of the trash bin feeders he's made are identical, but he's going to make another from a bin with slightly different dimensions. He's also put two smaller bins together and mounted them on a wagon gear to make an enclosed, portable bin for whole cottonseed, which he uses to add protein to his cattle diet.

"Because the bins were available for nothing and I used scrap metal and wire mesh I already had, the hay racks cost me nothing but my time and welding supplies," he says.

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"They keep bales dry and cattle can't pull hay out and stomp it into the mud," says Cecil Whitehead, who turns used garbage bins into portable hay feeders.



Bottom 2 ft. of gate is covered with 2-in. sq. mesh panel, with three headgates above it.