

Making Hay Without A Tractor

You don't need a tractor to make hay, says Joel Dufour, Earth Tools, Frankfort, Ky., who imports a complete "no tractor" hay system that's based on a walk-behind, 2-wheel power unit.

Made in Italy, the BCS machine is a gas or diesel-powered 2-wheel, gear-driven mini tractor with reversible handlebars, giving it front or rear pto-drive capability. The tractor is available from 5 to 14 hp and weighs 200 to 350 lbs. Available attachments include a 53-in. sicklebar; a side-delivery hay rake/tedder; and a round baler. The attachments fasten to the power unit in "front pto" mode, so the tractor pushes the attachment from the rear. Both the rake and baler come with a pair of front wheels and a steering lever that extends back over the tractor to the operator.

"It's an economical system for small-scale livestock farmers who want to produce their own hay, but can't justify buying conventional hay equipment and a tractor," he says.

Dufour is the only BCS dealer in the U.S. who specializes exclusively in BCS power equipment and compatible attachments. He says the market is growing. Walk-behind tractors like the BCS are popular in Europe, where there are a number of manufacturers of similar machines.

"Conventional haying equipment is too expensive for someone with only a few acres, and many small farmers have trouble finding someone to bale their hay. Even if they can hire someone they still need an expensive four-wheeled tractor to move big round bales around."

He says BCS is the largest selling two-wheel tractor in the world and CAEB, the manufacturer of the baler, is the first company to offer a round baler that adapts to a 2-wheel tractor. "The BCS power unit and compatible attachments have a low center of gravity, so the equipment works great for hilly areas. It can be used to safely make hay on slopes with up to a 45 degree angle. In fact, the University of Kentucky is so impressed with the BCS equipment that they're now demonstrating it to farmers in that state. Betty King is in charge of the program."

The sicklebar is available in widths up to

53-in. (60 in. on special order). Unlike conventional North American-made sicklebars, the lower stationary teeth don't extend beyond the top (moving) teeth. Also, there are no pointed "guards" sticking out in front which can jam up with cut material. "This sicklebar is virtually clog-proof and can even cut through a hay bale without plugging up," says Dufour. "Another difference is that the blades are 2 in. wide instead of 3 in. as on conventional blades. That results in a finer cut, and the narrow spaces between the teeth keep most rocks from getting in between to damage the blade."

The rake /tedder is available in 4 and 5-ft. models that fit any BCS tractor 8 hp and larger. It takes only about 30 seconds to convert the rig from rake to tedder. The baler weighs 700 lbs. and requires a power unit with at least 8 1/2 hp. It produces a 21 by 23-in. bale that weighs 40 to 55 lbs., depending on hay moisture and how tight you roll the bale. It'll produce a bale every 40 to 60 seconds.

Bales are formed by a series of chain-driven aluminum rollers around the circumference of the bale chamber. It forms a soft-core bale which allows air to circulate through the bale center. Bales are wrapped with a self-sticking, UV-resistant nylon mesh.

The tractor sells for \$2,000 to \$3,500 depending on horsepower. The sicklebar sells for about \$1,000. The rake sells for about \$1,200. The baler sells for about \$5,800.

Dufour also offers a wide variety of other attachments for the BCS including a reciprocating spader, rotary plow, cultivator, root digger plow, ridger, power sweeper, chipper-shredder, log splitter, mini trencher, snowblower, root-potato digger, 1-bottom plow, plastic mulch layer, utility cart, brush mower, rotary tiller, lawn mower, flail mower, and dozer blade. Also available is a custom-built power platform that converts the BCS pto-shaft drive into a pulley drive to run accessories with V-belts.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Earth Tools, 660 Mt. Vernon Rd., Frankfort, Ky. 40601 (ph 502 226-5751), or Betty King (ph 859 257-3404; E-mail: bKing@uky.edu).



"No tractor" hay system is based on the BCS walk-behind, 2-wheel power unit. It's shown here cutting hay with a 53-in. sicklebar.



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Round baler weighs 700 lbs. and produces a 23-in. bale that weighs 40 to 55 lbs.



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