

# Unusual Grain Storage System Uses Rail Cars, Storage Tanks

By Janis Schole

Rusty and Thelma Manuel's grain storage system is a little unorthodox, but they say it works well for them. Instead of using traditional grain bins, the St. Albert, Alberta couple purchased three used railway grain cars and several large industrial storage tanks.

One railcar had been fire damaged, and the other two were retired. Each car has four 1,000-bu. hopper compartments and the cost of each car was comparable to a 4,000 to 5,000-bu. grain bin. Rusty says price negotiation depended a lot on how quickly they could remove the cars.

Fortunately, Rusty owns a trucking company so he already had two 22-ton boom trucks to lift the rail cars onto a tractor trailer unit for hauling.

"Since there are four compartments on each railcar, we can keep different grains in each one. When we need to, we use three compartments for grain storage and one for processed feed," Thelma says. One car sits near

their cattle feedlot. "We had a special hopper made to fit underneath that hopper bottom. A 6-in. electric auger extends from that hopper and we fill pails from it for feeding cattle."

To unload the other grain cars, they use a hydraulic-driven auger on wheels.

Prior to bringing the railcars home, Rusty prepared a gravel and rock pad for each end of the cars, and set down railroad ties and a section of track. This way, the ground did not settle under each car's 57,000-lb. weight.

He says it's getting harder to find used railcars for purchase, because they are often sent to scrap yards instead.

Rusty also has two 4,000-bu. storage tanks and one 5,000-bu. tank that he purchased from a foundry where they had been used as sand silos. He says they have built-in unloading augers that he converted from electric to orbit motors. These tanks require a 51-ft. auger to fill them with grain.

Rusty uses an old boxcar for a storage shed



Each railcar is divided into four separate compartments. They also have a box car for storage.



Prior to bringing railcars home, Manuel prepared a gravel and rock pad for each end of the cars and set down railroad ties and a section of track.

to hold salt, minerals and square hay bales.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rusty and Thelma Manuel, Site 2, Box 30, RR1, St.



Manuel also bought two used 4,000-bu. industrial storage tanks and one 5,000-gal. tank and converted all of them for grain storage.

Albert, Alberta, Canada T8M 1M8 (ph 780 459-2884; fax 780 419-3622).

## Sun Shines Through Clear Vent Panels

The problem with most drop-panel or curtain ventilation systems for livestock buildings is when they're closed, the building gets dark.

Sun North Systems Ltd., Seaford, Ontario, has solved that problem.

Their Nova Lite drop panels are made with the same kind of unbreakable polycarbonate glass being used in greenhouses. Rather than a solid single pane, it's double skinned with air-filled cells between them.

"It allows the producer to use natural ventilation and, even when it's completely closed, natural light can still enter the building," says Monica Bowden, Sun North's chief executive officer.

She says the lightweight panels are easy to install, but can be difficult to ship. "Most of what we're making is custom sized to the building," she explains. "Some of the panels get to be 24 ft. in length. If we can stan-

dardize the panels to 8 ft., they're easier to package, handle and ship."

Maximum panel height with one glass pane is 6 ft. "We can make them bigger, but we have to add extra mullions to support the glass," Bowden explains.

She says they've sold Nova Lite panels for use in just about every type of livestock operation, but most have been for dairy cattle barns.

"The panels are attractive, too. Some people have used them for windows in gable end walls by installing them without a track," she adds.

She says the panels have about the same insulating value as glass, so they're not being used as much in areas where winters are more severe.

"We can ship Nova Lite panels anywhere in North America," Bowden says.

Cost is roughly \$10 per square ft., which



Nova Lite drop panels are made with same kind of unbreakable polycarbonate glass used in greenhouses. Even when they're closed, natural light can still enter building.

means a 6 by 8 ft. panel (48 sq. ft.) would be about \$480. That does not include necessary tracks, cables and hardware to mount them on steel, wood or concrete sidewalls. Shipping is extra. Orders are usually made and shipped within two weeks of the time they're received. Sun North technicians can also in-

stall the panels.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Sun North Systems Ltd., 92 Railway Street, Box 668, Seaford, Ontario, Canada N0K 1W0 (ph 519 527-2470; fax 519 527-2560; E-mail: sunnorth@sunnorth.com; Website: www.sunnorth.com).

## "Point And Shoot" Temperature Gun

Here's a handy new "toy" that'll instantly measure the surface temperature of almost any object using a beam of infrared light.

It looks like a radar gun and has a laser pointer that helps you zero in on whatever you want to measure. You just point and pull the trigger and the temperature instantly shows up on the backlit display. It's a safe way to measure hot, hard-to-reach, or moving parts. It'll read temperatures ranging from 0 to 525 degrees Fahrenheit.

The manufacturer, Raytek Corp., says users of the new product are constantly coming up with new applications. For example, mechanics are using it on engines to check exhaust systems, cooling systems, tires, brakes, bearings, and so on. The tool can also be used in the home, shop or even grain bins to spot costly energy losses around windows and doors.

Sells for \$99 at NAPA auto parts stores (ph 800 538-6272) and online at [www.autosportcatalog.com](http://www.autosportcatalog.com).



Unit instantly measures surface temperature of almost any object using a beam of infrared light.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Raytek Corp., 1201 Shaffer Rd., Box 1820, Santa Cruz, Calif. 95061 (ph 800 866-5478 or 831 458-1110; fax 831 425-4561; E-mail: [solutions@raytek.com](mailto:solutions@raytek.com); Website: [www.raytek.com](http://www.raytek.com)).

## Automatic Tailgate Control For Your Pickup

This new battery-operated actuator mounts inside your pickup bed and automatically opens and closes the tailgate on-the-go, improving the vehicle's fuel efficiency. Using a remote control, you can also manually open and close the tailgate at any position.

The "Droptail" mounts along one side of the bed and takes up only about 1 in. of cargo space. A microprocessor receives a speed signal from the vehicle's computer processing unit. The actuator automatically opens the tailgate as soon as the pickup reaches a certain speed, then closes the tailgate before the vehicle comes to a stop.

The open tailgate reduces aerodynamic drag and will improve fuel efficiency by 5 to 10 percent, says JSC Engineering, Inc., Calabasas, Calif. The open tailgate also improves back-up visibility. And, it makes it easier to hook up to a fifth wheel trailer.

The tailgate's original support cables still carry all the load. If there's cargo in the bed, the tailgate will not open automatically as long as the tailgate was lowered before placing items into the bed. Also, you can lock the tailgate in any position manually using the remote control at any time.

The unit fits over most spray-on and under-rail bedliners. Some liners may require



Actuator bolts on side of pickup bed, opening and closing tailgate automatically.



Unit can also be operated manually.

modification. Fits 1988 and newer GM full-size Fleetside pickups and 1997 and newer Ford F-150 Styleside pickups.

Sells for \$499 plus \$14.95 S&H. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, JSC Engineering, Inc., 26500 W. Agoura Rd., Suite 102-503, Calabasas, Calif. 91302 (ph 877 707-8245 or 818 878-0578; fax 818 880-5294; Website: [www.droptail.com](http://www.droptail.com)).

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