

# Farm-Based Businesses Help Boost Incomes

## They Come To Your Farm To Sharpen Discs

Dull disc blades and coulters on tillage equipment can waste fuel because they take more power to pull. Replacing them is expensive and time consuming.

A good alternative is to sharpen them, and the easiest way to do that is to call Ross or Nathan Blair at Walhalla, North Dakota. They'll sharpen them for you.

Ross' dad started a blade sharpening business in the early 1960's. Ross has been at it for more than 30 years now, and just this past year, Nathan, Ross' oldest son, hit the road with his own rig.

Blair says the tools they use to sharpen discs and coulters make their business different from most others. "We don't grind or shear blades. Instead, we use a cold

rolling method to draw the edge of the blade out, giving it a self-sharpening edge.

"Grinding removes metal and shortens the life of the blades. Our cold rolling method doesn't remove any metal. And because we're rolling the edges, we may actually restore some of the diameter that's been lost to wear," he says. "It can make badly worn blades that have lost much of their diameter cut as well as new ones."

He says the sharp, tapered edge created by the cold rolling process can last three times as long as one created by grinding or shearing.

"You can't buy a machine like the ones we use anymore," Blair continues. "Over the years, we've redesigned and modified them so they work better and more quickly."

The Blairs cover the Midwest and Northern Plains. Most of their business is in N. Dakota, S. Dakota, Illinois, Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Indiana, and Missouri but they also have customers in Arkansas and Montana.

He normally travels in a bus he converted to a motor home. During the summer, his family travels with him. Son Nathan works out of a pickup camper while he's on the road.

Because they can sharpen most discs and coulters right on the machine, the Blairs can usually sharpen a couple of typical tandem disks in a day. "If I don't have to move from farm to farm, I can sometimes do three disks," he says. "If I'm working for neighboring farmers, I try to get them to bring all their equipment to one location so I don't have to



The Blairs can sharpen most discs and coulters right on the machine.

move," he says. The price charged depends on the number of blades and the difficulty of getting to them. Prices start at around \$100 and go up from there. A typical 20-ft. tandem disk usually costs \$200 to \$250.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ross or Nathan Blair, Box 562, Walhalla, N. Dak. 58282 (ph 701 549-3663).

## Center Pivot Service Business

"My teenage boys made good money last year servicing center pivots thanks to equipment we originally designed for our own use," says Bob Wegener, Lindsay, Neb.

Wegener had been looking for an easier way to service the 10 center pivots on his own farm. The key piece of equipment he came up with is a 1/2 hp electric gear drive pump that pumps 140 weight oil at 1,200 psi through a 1/4-in. dia. hose at a rate of a quart a minute—even at temperatures in the 40's and 50's. It makes it easy to fill gearboxes from a 12 1/2-gal. oil tank.

"Before we came up with this system, refilling the gearboxes was a pain so we didn't do it as often as we should. Now it's a relatively easy process that doesn't take long," says Wegener, who spent a lot of time locating just the right pump to handle the heavy-weight oil.

He mounted the oil pump, a 5,000-watt

generator, reservoir and an air compressor on a trailer that he and his boys pull behind an ATV. It worked so well the boys started hiring out to neighbors. They charge \$7 per tower. The first thing they do is empty the gearbox or drain out any water, depending on the job. Then they refill it. They also lube the ball joints on the tower alignment control rods and grease the zerks below the collector ring on the center tripod. And they pump up the tires as needed.

The trailer-mounted service system worked so well a neighbor asked Wegener to put one together for him. The system is now on the market for \$1,100, which includes the pump system, hoses, and air compressor. Add \$300 for trailer. Model without compressor sells for \$900.

Contact: Bob Wegener, Rt. 1, Lindsay, Neb. 68644 (ph 402 428-5535; E-mail: rlweger@megavision.com).



Robert Wegener and his sons have designed equipment to service center pivots.



## They Keep Broilers & Layers On Pasture

When they first started hearing about the idea of raising poultry on pasture, dairy producers Tom and Sue VandenBergh liked the idea because of the low cost of production. It seemed like a good business for producing products they could market direct to the public. What's more, it was something the whole family could help operate. Even their 3-year-old daughter helps feed the chickens.

Most farmers with "pastured poultry" produce broilers in pens on wheels which they move from place to place as needed. The VandenBerghs went one step further when they built a "rolling shed" for layer hens. The metal-sided rolling small shed was built on an old wagon gear. There's a ramp up into the shed for the chickens, who roam freely during the day, feeding on grass and insects around the shed. They lay eggs in wooden nests hanging off the back side of the shed. The nests are at a height that makes it easy for the eggs to be gathered.

The rolling hen house is moved daily to a new spot in the pasture. Takes just minutes daily to feed and pick eggs.



Tom and Sue VandenBergh built this metal-sided "rolling shed" for layer hens. They lay eggs in wooden nests on back side of shed (below).



Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tom & Sue VandenBergh, 15261 E. 21st. Rd., Witt, Ill. 62094 (ph 217 594-2570).



Top of broiler pen folds back for easy access. VandenBergh moves pen once a day.

## On-Farm Yogurt Plant

One of North America's first on-farm yogurt plants opened up recently in Spring Valley, Wis. In a manufacturing facility located right next to the dairy barn, husband and wife team Michelle Wiegart and Leroy Clark have started producing CCJersey Creme Yogurt, made from milk produced by their purebred Jersey herd.

They got into the business using a turnkey system from an Israeli manufacturer called Pladot, which outfits mini-dairies all over the world. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Pladot, Ein Harold Meuhad, 18965 Israel (ph 011 972-4-6485350; Website: www.pladot.co.il).



## Farm-Based Business Equipment Sources



**EggCartons.com**  
24 Holt Road  
P.O. Box 302  
Manchaug, Mass. 01526  
ph 888-852-5340 or 508 476-0084  
www.eggcartons.com

(Egg cartons of all kinds as well as egg baskets, incubators, washers and more.)



Electric-Powered Apple Juicer

**Jefferson State Forest Products**  
P.O. Box 938  
Hayfork, Calif. 96041  
ph 530 628-4206  
www.jeffersonstateproducts.com  
(Do-it-yourself apple juice presses.)



**Cheese-Making Supplies**  
Hoegger Supply Company  
160 Providence Rd.  
Fayetteville, Ga. 30215  
ph 800-221-4628

(Cheese kits, cream separators & churns, cultures and Rennet, cheese presses, and more. Free catalog.)

**Jaybee Precision, Inc.**  
48 Kirk Pasture Rd.  
P.O. Box 231  
Bristol, N.H. 03222  
ph 603 744-6644  
www.jaybeeprecision.com  
(Manufacturer of the Vat™, a 7 to 15-gal. on-farm pasturizer.)



Pasturizer