

Inflatable “Air Barn” Sets Up Quick

Here’s an idea that’s getting a lot of attention in New Zealand, where it was invented and might just catch on here.

The Airbarn is an eye-catching, quick-to-set-up shelter that can be used for calves and lambs, hay and grain storage, or temporary machinery storage.

Invented by Geoff Pearson, Airbarns measure 30 by 18 ft. and can be joined together to form larger buildings. They are rated to withstand 100-knot winds and are constructed from a hi-tech nylon.

“It’s incredibly tough stuff,” Pearson says. “It’s also waterproof, yet breathable, and can withstand extreme weather conditions.”

Airbarns provide shelter and are very warm in winter. They pack up into a bag for easy portability and storage.

Pearson lives on a dairy farm himself and says they stack hay and other feed ingredi-

ents inside the inflated structures and then suck the air out to encase the feed in the covering material until it’s needed, at which time they simply reinflate the barn.

Each Airbarn comes with a 240-volt A/C electric blower. It takes only five minutes for one person to erect a building. Twelve stakes serve as anchors.

The units are available in any color and are priced about \$7,500 U.S. for the larger model and \$4,500 for either of two smaller models. Pearson is looking for a North American distributor.

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Air Barn is waterproof, breathable, and can withstand extreme weather conditions.



A 240-volt blower allows one person to erect the Airbarn in only five minutes.



To stop weeds you can put foam mulch down first and then plant into it, or plant first and then apply the foam around the plants.

They’re Using “Foam Mulch” To Stop Weeds

A chemist at the University of Illinois has come up with a revolutionary new way to control weeds without using chemicals or tillage equipment.

Al Morgan came up with a recipe for a “foaming mulch” that is sprayed between rows - and even in the row. The porous foam sets up, forming a barrier that stops weeds from emerging but still allows moisture to trickle down through it. The foam gradually breaks down.

“When the season is over, you can work the foam residue down into the ground and it becomes part of the soil,” says Morgan, who has patents on the mixing process and recipe that’s used to make the foam mulch.

What makes the idea work is that the foam is made up of organic material - cornstalks, straw, cotton fiber and other plant residue, along with old newspapers and just about anything that can be easily ground up. Morgan blends this material with foaming ingredients that can be mixed with water and then applied. The foam dries out a short time after being applied, leaving a thin mat.

Morgan has been testing the system at the University of Illinois for the past four years. He has also tested the system on his own small farm where he grows herbs, vegetables and flowers. “Foam mulch is less expensive than black plastic and also a lot easier to handle,” he says. “You can put the mulch down first and then plant into it, or plant first and then apply the foam around the growing plants. Some tests have shown that adding certain colors to the foam also helps increase yields.”

Morgan is working with a manufacturer



Morgan has tested new foam mixture at University of Illinois for the past 4 years, and hopes to have the foam mulch system on the market by next spring. “It’ll be geared toward high-value crops and gardens, but probably won’t be cost effective for large row-crop acreage,” he says.

“The customer will probably buy his own mixing equipment and pumps - most of which are already commercially available - and we would then license our technology to him. Or, we may sell the customer packages of dry mix.”

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Cage mounts on any loader equipped with quick-tach bucket mounts.

Quick-Tach Cow Cage A Mobile Maternity Pen

Omery cows who’ve just calved often don’t want to go to the maternity pen, so Tom McConaghy decided the easiest and safest thing to do is to take the maternity pen to them.

“One cow got me down and just about finished me a couple of years ago, so I decided it was time to find a safer way to handle calving time,” says McConaghy. “A good many cows are just fine, normally, but when they calve, they can get really mean.”

McConaghy designed the 7 by 10-ft. cow cage using 1 1/4-in. pipe. It mounts on any loader with a quick-tach bucket mounts.

It incorporates a calf box on one side, with a maternity pen-style headgate on the other side. One of the pen’s 10 ft. side panels is actually a swinging gate.

McConaghy uses the tractor to lower the cage over either the calf or the cow. If the cow is captured, he can then safely move the

calf by hand into the calf box, where she can see it. The box position makes it a comfortable height for processing such as ear tagging, dehorning and castrating. The calf can be held in the box for transport with tarp straps.

If the calf is captured first, the cage still provides protection so he can place it in the box, and then open the gate panel, allowing the cow to enter the pen on her own.

“She usually does as soon as you’re out of there or start moving the pen with the tractor,” he says. “If you need to help the calf get started nursing, you can do it right there in the field because you’ve got the built-in headgate and crowding gate.”

McConaghy now builds the cow cages for sale for \$1,000 (Canadian) plus shipping.

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Maternity pen has a calf box on one side and headgate on the other.