

He Runs Skid Steer Loader With External Controls

Glen Farmer, Palisade, Colorado, can often be seen walking his Bobcat around his farmstead and even up to the door of his machine shop.

Farmer says his 741 Bobcat skidsteer is one of his most useful tools. "It's really stable and can lift just about anything I need to lift," he says. "The 2-cylinder diesel engine makes a tank of fuel last so long I sometimes forget to fill it up."

Even so, he felt the machine could be improved. "I use it to move machinery and parts to my shop, and often have to use a chain to fasten something to the bucket. I also use it for a portable hoist to hold heavy parts I'm trying to put in place. Since I almost always work alone at the shop, every time I needed to raise or lower the bucket, or move the machine just a little to reposition something, I had to climb in and sit down," he says. "I'm a coward when a bucket is above ground. I avoid going under one."

That often meant climbing into the seat from behind, through the back of the roll cage.

He'd been trying to come up with a way to avoid this hassle and, he says "One morning I woke up with a picture in my mind of just what I needed to do. I got up, went to the shop, and went to work on it."

Farmer's idea was to add external controls for every control on the loader, so he could maneuver and manipulate it without having to crawl in.

He cut a hole through the undercarriage frame on the left side of the loader and ran linkages to the throttle, the hydrostats for the left and right wheels and the hydraulic valves that control the arms and bucket. Later he

added a shaft connected to the parking brake, so he can set or release it. "I added a safety latch to the brake arm, so the vibrations of the machine can't accidentally release it."

He made a throttle lever out of a 12-in. length of 1 1/4 by 1/4-in. strap iron. He used 1/2-in. pipe to make levers for right and left wheel hydraulic lift controls. All of the external controls are located in a bank centered between the wheels on the left side.

"With the external controls, I can do everything from the ground that I can if I'm in the machine. I actually do walk alongside the loader as I'm moving something around."

To those who might worry about the safety of walking along beside a moving, riderless skidsteer, Farmer says, "OSHA probably wouldn't like it. The manufacturer might not, either. I'm aware of the potential danger and I don't let anyone else use the external controls."

"When I move dirt and gravel, dig holes, pull tree stumps, etc., I always ride inside the caged cab, using seat belt fastened. On rough, hilly ground, I use the safety bar across my lap," he says.

"But having the controls actually makes the way I use the machine safer for me," Farmer continues. "It seems safer to me to be able to control it externally than to have to get in and out of it with a load on the raised arms, or try to get on or off the machine with the bucket raised part way."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Glen Farmer, 3611 G. 4/10 Rd., Palisades, Colo. 81528 (ph 970 464-7582; email: xlnfarm@aol.com).



Glen Farmer added external controls for every control on his Bobcat skid loader, so he can maneuver it without having to crawl in (above). He cut a hole through the undercarriage frame on the left side of loader and ran linkages to the throttle, the hydrostats for the left and right wheels, and the hydraulic valves that control the arms and bucket (right).



Bracket-Mounted Post Gripper

Roger Holcomb, Mentor, Minnesota, needed a better fence around his buffalo herd. He decided to build one out of railroad ties, despite the fact that he was recuperating from hernia surgery. He succeeded, thanks to a bucket-mounted post handler he put together in his shop.

Holcomb used 4-in. square steel tubing, an old hydraulic cylinder, some threaded rod, and a small piece of 3/16-in. plate steel.

He started by cutting two 3-ft. lengths of the steel tubing to make "fingers". In one piece, he drilled two 1 1/2-in. holes and put matching holes through the bottom of the old bucket. Then he fastened the tube solid to the bucket, using 1 1/4-in. threaded rod cut to length for bolts.

He set the second section of tube about 8 in. away from the first and fastened it with just one bolt, so it would pivot back and forth. He bolted the steel plate over the top of the square tubes.

On the back end of the pivoting rod, he welded ears to match up with his hydraulic cylinder. The other end of the cylinder fastens in the bottom of the bucket.

"I had my ties all loaded on a wagon. To pick one up, I raised the bucket and tilted it down so the grapple fingers were over the post. Then I grasped it by activating the hy-

draulic cylinder. It worked great after I cut some teeth into the inside of the stationary tube, so the post wouldn't slip out," he says.

"I have an 11-in. post hole auger on the 3-pt. hitch of the tractor. I replaced the pto drive on it with a hydraulic motor. That makes it a lot easier to use. If I hit a rock or get into tough soil, I can back it out of the hole," he says.

"When I'm making fence, I pick up a post with the front-end loader and drive to the place where I'm going to put it. After I dig the hole, I make a U-turn with the tractor and then drop the post into the hole," Holcomb explains. "It really works well and I didn't have to touch one post."

Holcomb says despite the size of the threaded rod he used for bolts, he's broken more than a couple of them, mostly by gripping the post a little too tightly.

"It only takes a couple of minutes to replace one. And since it's fastened to the bucket with bolts, when I'm finished setting posts, I can take it out in less than 10 minutes and have the loader bucket to use for other things."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Roger Holcomb, 30990 140th Ave. SE, Mentor, Minn. 58736 (ph 218 637-8283).



Bucket-mounted post gripper made it easy for Roger Holcomb to build a railroad tie fence by himself.



Two 3-ft. lengths of steel tubing act as grapple "fingers", one of which pivots back and forth (above). Hydraulic cylinder fastens to bottom of bucket.



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