

## Kids Love These Big Wheel Buses

Both kids and adults like riding in these two monster buses built by Kelly Batsch and Justin Finser. Passengers sit more than 7 ft. off the ground as they tour Amazing Exotics, a 100-acre nonprofit facility for unwanted exotic animals.

Batsch says kids especially love climbing into the tiger-striped orange and black bus with its four-wheel steering and open-sided design. "Kids love it when we crab-walk to the side with that big bus."

A second big bus remains school bus yellow. Though it doesn't crab walk, the big 4-WD with its 429 Cobra Jet engine does have its original roof and windows. They protect visitors as the bus races through a giant mud hole on the edge of a marsh.

Creating the giant buses was an adventure for Batsch as he helped Finser rip the original vehicles apart and rebuild them. The safari bus was the first effort.

"We cut the roof off and stripped the chassis down to nothing. We remounted it on two steel I-beams," recalls Batsch. "We took two front axles, a transfer case and front suspension systems from 5-ton military trucks."

They modified the suspension systems to fit the school bus frame, but replaced the original bus engine with a same-size 350 cu. in. motor. They then connected the original

bus transmission to the military differential to get front wheel drive.

While the two were able to utilize the bus steering for the front axle, they jury-rigged a system to steer the back axle. They mounted an electric starter motor to power a hydraulic pump above the rear axle. It was connected to the original hydraulic steering mechanism of the axle. A switch labeled left and right was installed on the driver's console to activate the motor and direct the wheels.

The second bus was also stripped down, set on I-beams and outfitted with front and back axles, transfer case and suspension systems, also from 5-ton military trucks. Instead of staying with just the original automatic transmission, they added a standard transmission between it and the transfer case to provide the equivalent of more than 20 gears. The low end of the gears offers plenty of torque for grinding through the mud hole.

What really gets the attention of kids and adults alike are the 66-in. tall, 44-in. wide tires built for use on heavy industrial equipment or fertilizer spreaders. The men had to custom fabricate wheels to match up to the military axles. Mounting them was the biggest part of the adventure, recalls Batsch.

Batsch and Finser fabricated a folding ladder to get up into the safari bus. For the big



Passengers sit more than 7 ft. off the ground in these two monster buses, as they tour a 100-acre nonprofit facility for unwanted exotic animals.

yellow bus, they welded ramps from two moving vans together and mounted one end on 4 by 4 posts. The bus backs up to the ramp and people get on or off.

The buses have served the facility well as entertainment for guests and to promote Amazing Exotics at local parades. Batsch says operational changes at the facility have resulted in the decision to sell the buses. Although appraised at more than \$50,000 each, they are being offered for sale at \$30,000

apiece or \$50,000 for the two of them.

"They'll be a steal for the right person or persons," says Batsch. "The tires alone ran \$25,000 for the two sets of four, and then there were the custom made wheels. The buses themselves were the least expensive part of the entire project."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Amazing Exotics, SR 452, Umatilla, Fla. 32784 (ph 352 821-1234; fax 352 821-4225; yrf45@aol.com; www.amazingexotics.com).



Steve Kenyon turned a 5-ft. dia. by 3 1/2-ft. wide flotation tire into this easy-to-load-and-use pellet feeder.

## "Made It Myself" Pellet Feeder

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

It took very little modification for Steve Kenyon to turn a 5-ft. dia. by 3 1/2 ft. wide flotation tire into an easy-to-load-and-use pellet feeder.

Kenyon picked up the damaged tire (originally off a chemical spreader) for free at his local tire shop.

He notes that when choosing a tire it's very important that it be as wide as possible, so it will be stable enough to stand in an upright position on its own.

Turning the tire into a pellet feeder required only two steps, according to Kenyon. First, he used an angle grinder to cut a 1-ft. hole in

the face of the tire, shaping it to fit between two lugs.

Since he has a Hydra-dec bale truck, the only other thing he needed was a 5-ft. section of drill stem that goes through the center of the tire like an axle.

"I just left the center of the tire open. You can buy a manufactured pellet feeder with the sides closed in and a pipe through the center so you can pick it up, but why go to all that work?" Kenyon asks.

The main reason Kenyon chose to leave the sides of the tire open is that it makes filling much easier.



A 5-ft. section of drill stem goes through center of tire to serve as an axle.

"If you're filling a commercial unit with a five-gal. pail, you have to lift it above your shoulders to pour it in, but with this one, you just pour it in from the side. Because of the wider tire, it still holds about twentyfive 5-gal. pails of pellets, even with open sides," he says. "Everytime it rolls a revolution, almost 5 gal. of pellets drop out."

Kenyon says the reason he built his low-input pellet feeder was because he had a bull pen with about 35 mature bulls in it – "and you don't walk in there on foot with a pail of pellets!"

Thanks to his almost free feeder, Kenyon

has automated much of the job and can maneuver through the bullpen in his truck. He says the feeder can be emptied in about a minute and it spreads the pellets out so that even the less aggressive animals have access.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Steve Kenyon, Greener Pastures Grazing Management Ltd., R.R. 1, Pickardville, Alberta, Canada T0G 1W0 (ph 780 674-8871, cell 780 307-4132; fax 780 305-2360; skenyon@telusplanet.net; www.greenerpasturesgrazing.com).

## Super "M" V-8 Farmall

When Ralph Kerr entered his Super M in a 5,000-lb. tractor pull, he went the distance twice - 318 ft. at 9.6 mph in second gear the first day and 319 ft. at 5.9 mph in first gear the second day. He had power to spare with his 250 hp, V-8 engine and the only parts that weren't stock were the engine, fan and carburetor.

"The IH 390 V-8 came out of a school bus and had been modified to burn propane," says Kerr. "I put a gas carburetor on it and dropped it into the Super M. I had to modify the frame rails and replumb the radiator, remove the oil filter and make it remote and use an electric fan to make it all fit under the stock hood."

From the flywheel back, nothing was changed. Even the tractor starter was retained. The toughest part, he says, was matching the

two flywheels. A friend of Kerr helped him find center points.

"I learned the value of reverse on a ratchet," says Kerr. "I had to keep taking things apart and putting them back together until I got it right."

"My goal was to convert the tractor with as many stock parts as I could," says Kerr. "I even had three sets of Super M V-8 decals made for it."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ralph Kerr, 4599 Grant Road, Central Point, Ore. 97502 (ph 541 664-2734).

Ralph Kerr's Super M tractor has power to spare, ever since he installed a 250 hp, IH V-8 engine in it.

