Ray Seefeldt's 8-ft. long locomotive was built over a Ford 25 hp, hydrostatic 2-WD garden tractor.

Locomotive Built On Top Of Riding Mower

After 36 years of dairy farming, Ray Seefeldt of Marshfield, Wis., now enjoys building rubber-tired locomotives and train cars in his shop.

"I try to make them look as authentic as possible," says Seefeldt. "I've used them to give rides at the Wisconsin state fair for four years, and also at many other events and parades."

The 8-ft. long locomotive is made almost entirely from light gauge metal and was built over a Ford 25 hp hydrostatic 2-WD garden tractor. It's painted red, silver and black and is complete with a cow catcher on front, as well as a silver bell, a big headlight, and a big steel smoke stack. A pair of fake rubber-tired wheels on each side of the locomotive are connected by a fake wooden piston rod, which goes back and forth just like a real locomotive. The locomotive pulls a pair of 4-wheeled cars that can each hold up to 11 people at a time.

He extended the tractor's frame by 3 ft. The tractor's rear wheels are hidden behind the locomotive's fake wheels, which are the rubber wheels off an old silage cart. He made wooden spokes inside the wheels and screwed them onto a round metal plate, then painted the spokes red and the plate black. Both sets of fake wheels are timed by a roller chain and sprockets. The front end of the fake piston rod that drives them moves back and forth inside a 5-gal. pail. "By pushing a lever in the cab, I can raise the wheels when making sharp turns or when loading the locomotive onto a trailer," says Seefeldt.

The locomotive's round hood was made from light gauge metal and sets in a tapered frame. The hood lifts forward for refueling the tractor. An air compressor that's belt-driven off the engine supplies air for the locomotive's whistle. It's made out of three lengths of copper tubing of different lengths to provide the right sound. Air from the compressor goes to a 10-gal. air tank located above the front wheels.

"It looks and sounds a lot like an old steam locomotive train whistle," says Seefeldt. "The air compressor runs off the tractor's mower deck clutch. Any time I run the engine, I turn on a switch that's connected to a pressure gauge. It causes the compressor to start and stop by itself."

Locomotive pulls a pair of 4-wheeled cars that each hold up to 11 people at a time.

The front wheels are covered by a flat metal plate and rim that makes it looks like the train is running on rails.

The locomotive's 4-ft. wide cab was made from light gauge metal. The headlight is contained in a metal box and runs off the tractor's 12-volt battery. The cow catcher is made from angle iron and pipe.

"Everyone who sees it falls in love with it," says Seefeldt. "Over the years I've built four different locomotives. It takes me about 600 hours to build each one. A lot of people think the outside wheels drive the locomotive, but they really just roll on the ground for show.

"Each train can be stripped, using no tools, in two minutes to allow loading into my pickup bed. I pull one pin to remove the cow catcher and another pin and a screw to remove the piston rod and rear wheels.

The passenger cars are made from wood and have a rounded ceiling to make them look like the real thing. They measure 8 ft. long by 4 ft. wide and have bench seats on all four sides. Each car has two sets of wide wheels on front and back. "Each car is completely finished off inside," notes Seefeldt.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ray Seefeldt, 11123 Co. Rd. H, Marshfield, Wis. 54449 (ph 715 384-8854).

FARM SHOW® Ag World®

Host Farms Help Preserve Rare Breeds

A Canadian organization has found a novel way to get more people involved in preserving the genetic diversity of domestic farm animals. The "Host Farm Program" was set up to place growing survival "seed groups" of animals on farms in controlled breeding programs.

The group is looking for qualified farmers and points out that while there is no initial outlay of cash to purchase animals, it takes a considerable commitment in time, energy and money to work with the animals. To offset the costs of the program, the host farmer gets to keep the first and every other offspring born.

"It's essentially a crop share arrangement, where Rare Breeds Canada owns the breeding stock," says office manager Jane Mullen of Castleton, Ont. "Host farms benefit by retaining their share of what they produce, and establishing their own herd as a result. As young stock becomes available, we place it onto new host farms, thus spreading out the genetics over a greater geographical area and reducing the risk of genetic loss due to natural disasters and/or disease while continuing to grow breed numbers. Host Farmers are encouraged to retain a portion of the offspring in the breeding program, but are at liberty to keep them or sell them as deemed necessary. Everyone benefits - especially the rare breed.

The program is ideal for agri-tourism ventures where the public visits farms to enjoy and learn about animals. These endangered breeds can be a good drawing card to on-farm commercial versions.

Breeds currently available include White Park cattle, Canadienne cattle, Horned Dorset sheep, Lac La Croix Indian Ponies, and Newfoundland Ponies.

"We need people who are committed to increasing the population of these endangered breeds," Mullen says. "Our organization is dependent on membership fees and volunteer labor, so corporate sponsorship is also desperately needed."

Host Farm Program places survival "seed groups" of animals on farms in controlled breeding programs.

Among the breeds currently available are these Horned Dorset sheep.

She points out that heritage breeds are disappearing at an astounding rate due to specialization in agriculture.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rare Breeds Canada, Jane Mullen, Office Manager, 1-341 Clarkson Rd, Castleton, Ontario, Canada K0K 1M0 (ph 905 344-7768; rbc@rarebreedscanada.ca; www.rarebreedscanada.ca).

First-Ever Mechanical Mower

"I read with interest the story in a recent issue about the world's first riding mower, pulled behind a horse. I thought you might be interested in what is considered the world's first mechanical lawn mower," says Dr. Graeme Quick, an Australian ag engineer who's written numerous books on the history of farm equipment.

Edwin Budding of Gloucestershire, England, developed the idea of a reel-type mower in 1830 after studying a "felt napping" machine at the textile factory where he worked. His first grass-cutting reel mowers were heavy going for one person, cutting a 19-in. swath and often requiring a second cutting to get the job done right. Sometimes one man would push while a second would pull.

Reel-type mower was developed by an English inventor in 1830. One man would push while a second would pull.

In 1842, Alexander Shanks made a wider horse-drawn version of Budding's mower to trim a golf course.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dr. Graeme R. Quick, Consulting Engineer, 83 Morrisons Rd., Peachester, Queensland 4519 Australia (g.quick@bigpond.com).