



Photo courtesy Joel McNair, Graze

Electric crane consists of a hayfork on a track. It's used to move 40 to 50 percent moisture hay from transport wagons to drying bins.

Loose Hay Handling System

On a recent trip to France, Joel McNair, editor of the publication *Graze* (www.grazeonline.com), was impressed by overhead loose cranes made by an Austrian company Steindle-Palvinger (STEPA).

"The farmer I visited, Jean-luc Gaugain, produces some of the finest dry, grassy hay I've ever seen -- the kind that allows cows to milk well and stay healthy while being fed just a couple of pounds of grain per day during lactation," says McNair.

Gaugain has an electric crane with a hayfork on a track. It's used to move 40 to 50 percent moisture hay from transport wagons to drying bins that hold about 100 tons of dry matter each.

The storage bins are inside a metal building whose walls and roof have been painted black. Hot air that collects under the roof is drawn down to the bottom of the storage bins and forced through wooden grids to the hay. Three or four days of full sun on the roof and walls will dry hay to 10 percent moisture.

The crane with an operator cab has an arm

that extends up to 30 ft. to grab more than 800 lbs. of hay at a time for distribution across the bin. The same crane picks up dry hay and places it in front of cows in tie stalls inside the same building.

Gaugain estimated the cost of cranes and building/drying bin construction totaled \$240,000 at current exchange rates. McNair says the dairyman expects a four to five-year payback on his investment.

STEPA hay cranes feature LED spotlights, a comfortable cab, and a joystick with foot pedals for control. Three different types of booms are available with two, three or four telescopic extensions, a reach of up to 55 ft., and a lift of nearly 9 tons.

Although STEPA has a Canadian distributor, the company has no plans to introduce the hay crane in North America.

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Crane's arm extends up to 30 ft. to grab more than 800 lbs. of hay at a time and place it in front of cows in tie stalls.

African NoseRing Makes Weaning Easy

Centuries ago Zulu African natives made halters out of thorny vines to wean calves. The vines poked the cow if the calf tried to drink, and the cow moved away. Eventually the calf quit trying.

South African Dick Richardson developed the EasyWean NoseRing to mimic the old Zulu method. The spiked plastic ring is fitted into the nose of the calf and tightened against the septum with a stainless steel fastener.

"The biggest stress associated with weaning is not cutting off the milk supply, but in separating the calf from its mother," explains Judy Richardson, a South African beef rancher who sells the Nose Rings. "By using EasyWean NoseRings, ranchers are able to wean calves without separating the cows and calves."

After 4 to 6 weeks the cows stop lactating, and the cows and calves can remain in the same pasture.

For ranchers who still prefer to separate cows and calves, she suggests putting the NoseRings in the calves at least two weeks before the calves are moved.

"This greatly reduces the stress of weaning, and, when the time comes to separate the animals, the weaners will leave their mothers



Spiked plastic ring is fitted into nose of calf. It allows ranchers to wean calves without separating the cows and calves.

without a backward glance," Richardson says.

The EasyWean NoseRings are easy to remove and are made of high quality acetyl so they can be reused. Richardson ships them to the U.S. for \$5 each for small batches (plus shipping) and offers discounts for larger orders - \$3.60 for 200, for example. She also has smaller EasyWean NoseRings for sheep and goats.

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Spring-loaded cedar stick with yellow and orange ribbons is attached to a water shut-off gadget that Carlson made.

Tip-Up Warns Him Water Is Off

In the winter, Wisconsin farmer Craig Carlson uses a tip-up when ice fishing to let him know when he's hooked a fish. During the summer, he uses a tip-up to let him know when he needs to check the couplings on the mile-long hose delivering water to his 70 beef cows that graze in a different paddock each day. The tip-up - a cedar stick with yellow and orange ribbons - is attached to a water shut-off gadget Carlson made.

He built it four years ago to save wear and tear on his pump whenever hose couplings loosened, and water leaked. After talking to a plumber friend who said there were no simple solutions, Carlson came up with a mechanical system with a pump switch, a bow trigger release, and half a spring from a storm door.

"If the pressure drops, the pump switch senses it," Carlson explains. "A spring (trigger release) closes the valve and flips up the spring-loaded stick like a tip-up."

The parts are mounted on a piece of wood and slipped into a plastic tote on cement blocks, which is visible from the kitchen window.

"I told my kids I'll pay them \$5 if they see the flag is up," Carlson says. "It alerts



When water pressure drops, a trigger-release spring closes a valve and flips up the spring-loaded stick like a tip-up.

me to the fact that there's a problem, and I find the leak faster. When it's hot it can be an emergency if the cattle don't have water."

Carlson calls his gadget H2 NO and built it from off-the-shelf parts and scrap materials for less than \$50. He has also built them for other grazers, and will sell plans to others who are interested.

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Feeder is built on top of a Case wagon running gear and uses an old pop-up camper top for a roof.

Hay-Saving Portable Feeder

"I've built three of these portable hay feeders, which I think save a lot of hay compared to conventional round metal bale feeders," says Norman Klenke, Centralia, Mo.

"I built the feeder shown in the picture on top of an old Case wagon running gear. A pop-up camper top, which was being junked, was used for a roof. All lumber used to make the sides and posts on the feeder were treated 2 by 6-in. boards.

"The front end of the feeder hinges open so you load in three 5-ft. dia. bales at a time using a tractor loader. One of the best things about the feeder is that when the ground gets muddy around the feeder, you can just hook up to it and move to a new spot."

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