

# Tracked Fencing Machine Works Fast In Rugged Terrain

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

Thanks to the fencing machine he rigged up this spring, Scott Miller now gets more work done working alone than he used to with a helper.

The Athabasca, Alta. man has operated a custom fencing business for about 5 yrs., pulling a rubber-tired post pounder behind a tractor. A big disadvantage of that method was that it got stuck in soft ground easily. His new system consists of a Morooka MST 800 Crawler Carrier, which has rubber tracks. Miller modified the unit for fencing purposes, investing a total of \$45,000, including the \$30,000 cost of the used crawler.

"This machine won't get stuck, even in places where an ATV would have trouble. It's also much easier to operate," Miller says. "I've found I can put in at least a third more posts by myself with this machine than 2 people can with a normal pull-behind pounder."

He removed the Morooka crawler's standard cargo box and mounted a home-built post-carrying rack on the frame behind the cab. This allows him to carry an 80-post bundle.

"I had a welder do some fabrication on the back of the Morooka so I could mount a 3-pt. pto-driven pounder using two pin pockets for it to pivot. The pounder is made by Wheatheart Manufacturing Ltd., out of Saskatoon, Sask.," Miller says. "If I ever

want to, I can remove the pounder and put the crawler's box back on by taking out 4 pins and unhooking 2 hydraulic hoses."

Since the crawler is hydrostatic driven, Miller added a second hydraulic pump when he converted it to run the pounder. This enables him to lift the pounder up while driving to the next post and then let it down for pounding.

"The pounder has 2 different hydraulic rams -- one tilts and the other lifts, so it's always fairly level with the ground," he says.

"I modified the Morooka's steering linkages so I can run the machine and fence all alone," Miller explains. "I have steering arms in both the cab and at the rear of the machine, allowing me to drive the machine while walking beside it."

To include a wire roller/unroller feature on his rig, Miller welded a receiver hitch onto the pounder, and then mounted a Level-Wind Wire Spooler manufactured in Red Deer, Alta. He plumbed the unit's hydraulic motor into the pounder's system. Miller also mounted 3 arms to the back of the pounder so he can simultaneously lay down 3 wires.

The unroller's hitch makes it easy to move the post pounder to the tractor, if need be.

"The unroller and the post pounder need to be operated from the back of the crawler, where the levers are located," Miller says. "I usually pound along a pre-tensioned barb



"This machine won't get stuck, even in places where an ATV would have trouble," says Scott Miller about his rubber-tracked fencing rig.

wire (set up with line posts). As I walk along, I pound the posts and unroll the wire at the same time. I have a marker (a rope with a colorful weight at the end of it) on the back that I drag behind, and when it hits the post that I just pounded, I know that it's time to stop and pound the next post. It's very efficient."

Because the unit has a solid track, Miller says "it doesn't have any bounce or slide when you start pounding, like the rubber-tired pounders do."

So far, he's used the rig on lots of soft ground, muskeg, and on steep side hills, with no problems. He can install about a 1/2-mile

of fence per day or alternately, he can remove about a mile per day.

"After 2 months of use, I haven't found anything I'd like to change about it yet," he says.

Miller generally takes on custom fencing jobs within a 150-mi. radius of home and on average, charges about \$3,000 (Can.) per mile for labor and equipment; materials are extra.

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## "Get Back" Haybine Jack

"I like my 1999 New Holland 488 10-ft. haybine but the hand-cranked lift jack on the tongue was located too far forward. One time I made a left hand turn with the machine, and the jack's sharp edges cut into the tractor's rear tire which cost \$500 to replace. I solved the problem by cutting off the jack assembly and moving it back 16 in.," says Bruce McNamara, Solway, Minn.

He used a grinding wheel to cut the jack off the tongue. "The grinding wheel did a nice, neat job. I repainted the tongue, and now you can hardly tell where the jack was before," says McNamara.

The relocated jack provides another benefit, says McNamara. "In the past, an

upright support for the haybine's pto shaft was always in the way when I cranked the jack. Now there's nothing in the way when cranking the jack so it's not a problem."

McNamara says there are thousands of similar New Holland haybines on the market that have the same problem. "I don't know why the company doesn't move the jack farther back, because there's plenty of room," he notes.

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The lift jack on Bruce McNamara's haybine was causing the jack to cut into tractor's rear tire on turns. So he cut off the jack assembly and moved it back 16 in.

## Firewood Processor Built From Salvaged Farm Equipment

"My father, brother and I all heat our homes entirely with wood. Commercial firewood processors can cost \$30,000 or more, which I found hard to justify. So, I built my own using pieces of salvaged farm equipment. It allows one person to easily cut, split, and load firewood," says Jay Merriner, Winchester, Va.

His hydraulically controlled firewood processor loads split wood into a truck or wagon. "The only hands-on part is putting tongs onto the logs to lift them, and also pulling levers on the machine. The rest is done mechanically."

To process a log, the tongs are attached to the butt of the tree and an electric winch is used to drag it up to a 30-in. long chainsaw blade where they're cut to the desired length.

Tractor hydraulics run everything except the chainsaw and elevator, which are pto-driven. A right angle gearbox that comes off the pto is used to belt-drive the saw, which runs at 5,000 rpm's. Tractor hydraulics are used to tilt the saw up or down. As the saw tilts it releases tension on the drive belt to

start or stop the saw.

The section of cut log is dropped on a wood splitter where it's split into 6 pieces. The wood then falls onto an elevator that loads into a truck or wagon.

Merriner says he didn't use any machine tools at all to build the firewood processor. It's built on the wheels and axles off an old truck frame. The guide that the log slides on was made by cutting off part of an old water tank. The splitter is mounted on a forklift mast, and the elevator is an old grain elevator.

"My only cost was for the saw blade and hydraulic hoses, for which I paid \$250," notes Merriner.

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An electric winch is used to drag log up to a 30-in. long chainsaw blade, where it's cut to the desired length.



Hydraulically-controlled firewood processor loads split wood into a truck or wagon.

