



Mike Gilmore says basic construction skills are all you need to build your own pole barn. His pole barn kit provides everything else.

## Do-It-Yourself Pole Barns

Mike Gilmore says he can make building your own pole barn easy. The owner of DIY Pole Barns says basic construction skills are all that is needed. His package provides everything else.

"We specialize in pole barns, so we get it right," says Gilmore. "You can buy the materials to build a pole barn from any lumberyard, but we focus on also providing the design and engineering that will save the customer money."

Gilmore has sold his pole barn kits in states from New Jersey to Missouri and Michigan to Tennessee. He started the kit business in 2004 after watching area lumberyards focus on building pole barns, not helping their customers build their own. Often, he notes, all the do-it-yourself customer got was a list of materials.

"We provide a full set of blueprints with detailed assembly instructions, and we act as technical consultants to walk you through things you don't understand," he says.

Gilmore says his kits are complete, down to cement for footings. He notes that the most difficult thing in building a pole barn

yourself is getting the foundation right. That is followed by setting the trusses.

"Getting the footer for the post right is very important, and the trusses need to be level and square," he says. "They take a bit of time and effort; otherwise, building from our kit is easy."

Gilmore advises his customers to rent a skid steer with an auger for making footings. It'll also come in handy for moving dirt and material and setting the trusses. The right equipment speeds the project, as does the right help.

"A couple of people can build a pole shed in 2 to 4 good weekends," says Gilmore.

DIY's most popular kit is a 10-ft. high, 30 by 40-ft. pole barn that sells for \$6,018. Standard kits range in size from 24 by 32 by 10 ft. (\$4,634) to 40 by 80 by 14 ft. (\$14,824). Custom kits are available as well. Standard kits also can be ordered without metal roof and siding.

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## Skinning Machine Takes The Pain Out Of Hide Pulling

Brian Riske manufactures and sells the Skinning Machine invented by his late father, Robert Riske, who still enjoyed trapping at age 66, but pulling hides off 20 to 30 raccoons a day was growing more difficult. So, he developed the Skinning Machine and used it for a decade before he died.

Riske's machine comes in three models. Each includes a winch, telescoping tube and a gambrel. A few cuts are made, including skinning out the tail. The gambrel hooks into the legs, which have also been skinned back, and the hide from the legs is put in clamps on both sides of the machine. Flip the winch switch, and it pulls the hide off. The operator stops it along the way to make cuts around the front legs, ears, eyes, nose, etc.

"One guy in Minnesota can take a raccoon hide off in two minutes," Riske says. "Some guys skin hogs with it."

Riske's Skinning Machine requires 24 by 30 in. of floor space and has a telescoping tube that reaches from 6 ft. 7 in. to 14 ft. 7 in. The solid base is welded 1/4-in. angle iron and the telescoping tube is made of 3/16-in. square tubing.

With a 12-in. opening it's big enough to "skin whatever you can clamp in there," Riske says. Customers have used it for coyotes, otter, raccoon, muskrats (three at a time) and even commercial deer processing.

Models come in two winch sizes. The 5/8



Skinning Machine comes with a 12-in. opening that's big enough to "skin whatever you can clamp in there," says inventor Brian Riske.

hp winch is \$425. The 1 1/8 hp winch is \$450. An optional foot control is available for \$25. Riske also offers an in-field model that fits on a receiver hitch with a battery-operated winch. It sells for \$350.

"We stand behind them. I have yet to have people call that they have problems with a machine," Riske says.

Riske also custom makes live traps with a easy rollover release.

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## Bin Latch Could Make Grain Bins Safer

Jake Lay's Lifesaver 2000 grain bin safety latch could prevent most accidental deaths in grain bins. The simple electric switch and hatch gate make it nearly impossible to run an electric bin auger if someone is inside the bin.

"Once installed, if you open the hatch gate, the auger shuts off," says Lay. "It can't start up again until the latch is locked shut, and that can't be done from the inside."

Lay developed the Lifesaver 2000 after hearing about a friend's son who died in a grain bin accident. He designed it to be simple and easy to install and operate.

The system consists of an electric switch, a wire mesh guard gate, and an external latch. Electrical power normally connected to the unloading auger is run up the outside of the bin to the gate switch. A second cord carries electricity to the auger. If the safety gate is unlatched and swung open, the power shuts off to the auger. Shutting the gate repowers the auger.

"We designed it to make operation as simple as plugging in a lamp," says Lay. "It only requires 6 bolts to install. With the wire mesh guard, you can visually inspect the grain without opening the gate. You could even go inside and hold the guard shut so the auger would run. However, if you started to get pulled down, the gate would swing open and the auger shut down."

Lay has demonstrated the Lifesaver 2000 at farm shows and shown it to grain bin companies and insurance companies. The response has been surprisingly lacking.

"Nobody will even look at it," says Lay. "Grain bin companies are afraid it will suggest their bins are dangerous. Insurance companies won't endorse it until it is UL approved. Farmers don't want to spend money if they don't have to do it."

Lay can't justify spending the money on testing if no one will buy the unit. Meanwhile, farmers and their family members continue to die in grain bin mishaps. According to Purdue University, 38 grain entrapments occurred in 2009 with 42 percent of those resulting in death.

About a third of grain suffocations are children. Lay fears that the installation of safety steps on the outside of large bins may actually increase the danger to young children.

"A child sees dad go into the bin, and later, when dad isn't looking, goes in," says Lay. "Then when dad turns on the auger, the child is trapped. With the safety latch, the auger couldn't be turned on if the child had entered."

If built in quantity, the cost of the system



Safety latch makes it nearly impossible to run bin auger if someone is inside bin. It consists of an electric switch, a wire mesh guard gate, and an external latch.



View from inside shows how gate covers bin opening.



If safety gate is unlatched and swung open, the power shuts off to auger. Shutting the gate repowers the auger.

and installation would be less than \$500. While producing the Lifesaver 2000 one at a time will raise Lay's estimated price, he's willing to make them to order.

"It's frustrating to pick up the paper and read about a guy suffocating in a bin," says Lay. "For less than \$500, he could still be walking around."

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Paul Golterman used feederhouse chains off old Deere combines to build this corral fence.



## Feederhouse Chain Fence

"It makes a strong, attractive fence," says Paul Golterman, Plentywood, Mont., who used feederhouse chains off old Deere combines to build a corral fence.

The feederhouse chains bolt to a series of 52-in. railroad tie posts that formerly supported an old woven wire fence. Each chain measures about 4 ft. wide by 10 ft. long. The chains are placed 2 high between the ties and lag screwed in place.

"It was easy to put together and really looks

nice," says Golterman. "I used to farm with a 1950's Deere 95 combine, and over the years I've junked out several similar models so I had a ready supply of feederhouse chains on hand. I also bought chains from local implement dealers for \$5 apiece."

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