"Bird Flusher" Saves Wildlife When Mowing Hay

Iowa farmer Kevin Holst built a "bird flusher" on front of his loader tractor to scare birds and animals out of his path when mowing hay fields.

"My goal is to scare away any nesting birds or animals before the mower runs into them," says Holst.

The device consists of a 14-ft. long, 3-in. dia. pipe that quick-taches to brackets on the loader arms. The pipe is the width of the tractor and Holst's 9-ft. offset mower. A series of welded-on chains spaced 20 in. apart hang down from the pipe, with small cowbells welded to the bottom of each chain. The pipe is hinged on one side so that if it contacts an obstruction it'll pivot back.

"It does a great job flushing out wildlife such as pheasants and rabbits, so they don't get eaten up by the mower," says Holst. "I use it on my Deere 6400 4-WD tractor. I generally run the pipe about 3 ft. off the ground, with the chains hanging just above ground level. A big advantage to mounting the flush bar on the loader is that I can go through narrow gates by simply raising the loader above the gate posts."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Kevin Holst, 22256-260th St., Eldridge, Iowa 52748 (ph 563 349-4858; kjholst1@juno.com).

Loader-mounted pipe has a series of chains hanging down from it. Cow bells are welded to bottom of each chain.

Tower-Mounted Water Tank Keeps Supply Constant

When a severe drought caused the water to dry up on his farm a couple of years ago, Frank Peters, Lacombe, Alta., came up with a novel solution that included building a small 5-ft. high tower out of landscaping ties to hold a 250-gal. plastic tank.

"I was pasturing cattle so I needed a constant supply of water. Our ponds had all dried up so I had no option but to pump water from our well," says Peters. "It turned out the well had just enough water for the cattle, if I could space out the pumping throughout the day.

"Another problem was that I live about 3 hours away from the pasture, and the power would often go off for one reason or another. Then the pump would lose all its pressure and the pressure switch would shut off so there would be no water for the cattle, even when the power came back on."

To solve these issues, he built a small 5-ft. high tower out of landscaping ties to hold a 250-gal. plastic crate tank. He ran a pipe from the tank to a 300-gal. water trough that's controlled by a float. Then he ran a line from the well to the tank, where a float also controls the tank level. "This line was then throttled back with a valve to fill the tank over a few hours. It allowed the well to recover enough to not run dry," says Peters.

To solve the power problem, he installed a 1/2-in. electric solenoid valve in-line on the line going to the tank. "This valve requires power to hold it open," says Peters. "If the power goes off, the valve will close and keep whatever pressure there is in the pressure tank. As soon as the power comes back on, the valve will open and water will flow again."

Peters admits the system is a bit complicated, "but it all works and the cattle always have water. Electric shut-off float valves like the one I bought are available at most farm supply stores," he notes.

The 5-ft. high tower supports 250-gal. plastic tank. A float and valve system is used to fill tank, allowing well to recover enough to not run dry.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Frank Peters, 1-22 Bruns Rd., Lacombe, Alta., Canada T4L 1N9 (ph 587 877-5678; chilko99@gmail.com).

Fruit picker's aluminum handle supports an 8-in. dia. wire basket. Four curved metal fingers on one side of basket bend inward at 90 degree angle to pull in fruit.

Homemade Fruit Picker

"My homemade fruit picker works great for picking apples, pears and other fruit. It makes picking fruit a fun job," says Chad Travis, Drasco, Ark.

The picker consists of an 8-ft. long aluminum handle that supports an 8-in. dia., 5-in. deep wire basket made from a box spring bed frame. Four curved metal fingers are located on one side of the basket. The fingers extend a few inches above the basket and bend inward at a 90-degree angle. A piece of felt at the bottom of the basket, taken from an insulated rubber boot, cushions the fruit as it falls into the basket.

"To pick fruit, I reach up into the tree and pull the basket toward me until the fingers contact the fruit. Then I give the basket a gentle tug, which causes the fruit to break loose from the stem and fall directly into the basket. Depending on the size of the fruit, the basket can hold 3 to 4 apples or pears.

"I've used it to pick several hundred pounds of fruit at a time. It's lightweight and easy to use," says Travis. "I looked at some fruit pickers used by nursery suppliers, but they were plastic and smaller than mine. To help keep the fruit from bruising, I covered some of the metal prongs on the sides of the basket with rubber vacuum hose, using zip ties to secure them. I used a discarded aluminum TV antenna pole to make the handle. It attaches to the basket with a short length of pipe that fits inside the pole and is bolted to a pair of metal straps that are welded to the bottom of the basket."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Chad Travis, 574 Greers Ferry Rd., Drasco, Ark. 72530 (ph 870 668-3400).

Three layers of horizontal wire are stretched between posts. Tomatoes grow up through the layers with no need for tying or worrying about cages falling over.

Permanent Wire Tomato "Cages"

Several years ago, Alex Zieba was running a commercial vegetable garden (CSA) and needed to cage 600 tomato plants cheaply and quickly. That's when he came up with an idea that he says is still one of the best gardening ideas he's ever had.

"A neighbor gave me a few rolls of old wire. I just laid out the wire – which has 4 by 4-in. openings - in 3 horizontal layers the length of the tomato bed. Then I place posts every 6 ft. or so along the sides and tie the wire panels to the posts. The layers are positioned 12 in., 24 in. and 35 in. off the ground. I also added 2 by 2 crossbars between the posts to provide extra support.

"The tomato bed in the pictures is 25 ft. long. The plants are placed every 3 ft. in the row and grow into the cages by themselves with no further tying, training or worrying about cages falling over. The fruit is kept well off the ground and is easy to pick from the sides. Tomatoes are one of the few crops you can grow in the same place year after year so a thick mulch under the wires keeps the area weed-free and fertilized for next year, with no need to move the cage. So you just have to assemble this system once and it'll pay off for years to come."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dr. Alex Zieba, Coordinator, Philosophy & Humanities, Heritage College, 325 boul. Cite des Jeunes, Room 215C, Gatineau, Quebec J8Y 6T3 (azieba@cegep-heritage.qc.ca).