

Drought-Ravaged Corn Crop Converted To Silage Bales

It was so hot and dry in much of Oklahoma this summer that the corn burned like toast. One Oklahoma farmer got the most out of his crop by selling it to Devan Harber, a cow calf operator 70 miles away near Red Oak, Okla.

Harber and 2 other men converted the standing crop, which was never combined, into 800 silage bales wrapped in plastic. They used a 30-ft. Claas rotary mower to cut the corn plants about 6 in. off the ground, then raked the unshredded stalks into windrows and baled them with 2 Claas Uniwrap round silage balers. They also used a 10-ft. Claas mower on front of a tractor with a Deere baler on back.

Harber badly needed feed for his livestock and agreed to pay the farmer to harvest the standing corn for feed. They used trailers to haul the balers, mowers, and a 30-ft. rotary hay rake to the farm.

The wrapped bales fell out of the balers onto big rubber flaps that dragged behind. The flaps kept the corn stubble from puncturing the plastic wrap. A loader tractor equipped with a revolving grapple fork was used to load the wrapped bales onto a semi truck.

With the Deere baler, which isn't designed to wrap bales in plastic, they mounted a 10-ft. section of the Claas mower on front of the tractor and baled directly behind the tractor.

They plan to wrap the Deere-made bales later this fall.

The Claas balers make 4-ft. dia. bales while the Deere baler makes 6-ft. dia. bales.

They finished up baling on August 16. Once they were off the field, the farmer got a good rain so he was able to immediately no-till plant the field to sudan grass. He hopes to make a single cutting of sudan grass within 2 months and then bale it and sell it for feed. Then he'll no-till plant winter wheat in late October.

Harber was able to harvest about three tons of silage bales per acre. He plans to grind the bales and then add soybean hulls and cottonseed meal to add protein.

Baling the standing stalks without shredding them first turned out to be somewhat of a headache, because the corn was tall, stringy and tough and tended to plug up the baler. "The corn was planted thick, so the big windrow made by the 30-ft. rotary mower really loaded up the Claas baler. It had to run pretty slow," says Harber. "We found that cutting and baling in the same operation with the Deere baler didn't work as well as cutting, raking, and then baling silage bales with the Claas balers. If we could do it over, we would have probably chopped the corn with a self-propelled or pull-type field



In addition to using a 30-ft. Claas rotary mower and then raking and baling with 2 Claas Uniwrap round silage balers, the Harbers also used a 10-ft. Claas mower on front of a tractor with a Deere baler on back.

chopper and then loaded it into trucks. But Harber, 12145 S.E. Cravens Rd., Red Oak, Okla. 74563 (ph 918 465-7752).

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"Vertical Axis" Wind Turbine

A technological breakthrough from VBINE Energy solves the vibration and other problems experienced in the past with vertical axis wind turbines (VAWT). The VBINE turbine's design allows it to be mounted to an existing tower, mounted to buildings, or even stacked one above the other. The company is even working with a supplier to develop a mount for the top of silos.

"This will be a great farm product," says Dwight Siman, VBINE Energy. "Our first system is designed for a single turbine, but can be easily scaled up. We are working on a triple turbine tower. We have only built a 5 kW turbine so far, but we have interest for everything from 1 to 20 kW turbines."

Like other vertical axis turbines, the VBINE has a wide range of effective wind speeds. It's bird friendly with its slow 120 rpm's at full speed and small diameter. The base unit is 34 in. dia. with a diameter of about 9 ft. at the outside of the blades. The entire height of the 5 kW turbine is only about 12 ft. It's also quiet, measuring only 66 decibels at full speed.

The ring-shape design allows the VBINE to be fitted to any existing cylindrical structure so that it rotates around the structure on which it is mounted, without interfering with other equipment mounted above or below.

"It's ideal for communication towers in remote areas," says Siman. "Not only does it replace expensive diesel-powered generators needed to power the tower, but the low rpm's produce no electromagnetic interference with communication towers' RF waves."

The VBINE starts to spin at as little as 2.6 mph and begins producing electricity at 6.7 mph. It produces 5 kW at 24.6 mph. The blades catch winds from any direction and are propelled by winds hitting both its front and back sides as it spins through the circle. With both mechanical and electric brakes, it will never exceed its cutout speed of 150 rpm's, regardless of wind speeds. Conventional propeller design turbines have to shut down at considerably lower wind speeds.

The generator consists of two sets of permanent magnets mounted on facing flywheels with a stationary stator in between. As the magnets pass over and under the fixed wound coil ring, the magnetic field is constantly changing, producing a current. The



VBINE turbine can be mounted on its own pole or attached to an existing communications tower or even a silo.

direct drive of blades to generator requires no brushes, gearboxes or driveshafts. The minimal moving parts and maintenance give an expected life span of up to 30 years.

"It will offer a good solution for new construction, where connecting to the grid can cost \$25,000 to \$50,000," says Siman. "Even in a grid situation, it has a payback between 7 and 12 years with no government assistance and wind speeds above 9 mph."

Simon says the retail price for the existing 5 kW system is around \$32,500. With a tower, grid inverter or battery charge controller and installation, the full turbine package would be around \$50,000.

"We have dealers throughout much of Canada and are working on setting up dealers in the U.S.," says Siman. "We have worldwide certification for all components. Interested readers can contact their nearest existing Canadian dealer or order direct from VBINE."

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A Massachusetts company says their do-it-yourself "logs" make it easy to build your own outdoor barbeque pit.

Do-It-Yourself Portable Barbeque Pit

If you played with Lincoln Logs as a kid, you can build your own outdoor barbeque pit with do-it-yourself "logs" from an innovative Massachusetts company. One big bonus of the new firepit is that you can easily take it apart to move it.

The "logs" are handmade in a Maine factory out of Norlite, a derivative of shale, that's been tempered and mixed with binder cement. Each 5 1/2 by 5 1/2-in. piece has steel rebar inside for added strength. Pieces range from 12 to 42 in. long, with the heaviest pieces weighing in at 35 lbs.

Charlie Reynolds, owner of Precast Outdoor Fireplaces, saw the fireplace design for the first time nearly 20 years ago. He convinced the New England family that made them as a hobby that he could market them to others.

Permanent brick firepits often crack because of severe winters and frost heaves, Reynolds points out. The precast fireplaces are free floating and flex at the joints.

They are also very safe.

"You can touch the outside and it doesn't get hot," he says. "There is no heat coming off the sides or back of the fireplace."

He recommends placing it at least 2 ft. from flammable surfaces. Many customers place it on the decks of in-ground pools. Some move the fireplace between their residence and seasonal home. A few carry pieces in to remote areas, while others ferry them to islands. Many customers set up the barbeque pits permanently in backyards.

Reynolds takes his for tailgating at Patriot games. By the time the game is over, the fire



A big advantage of the design is that you can easily take the firepit apart to move it.

is out, and the links are cool and ready to disassemble to transport home.

Fireplaces range from the 10-piece Deluxe Firepit (\$349) to the Mt. Katahdin, complete with a chimney and table tops on each side (\$1,589).

"The Acadia is my best seller at \$1,189," Reynolds says. It also has a chimney, which eliminates the problem of swirling campfire smoke, and the generous double 24 by 26-in. grills can cook 16 sirloin steaks at a time. (The bottom grill holds the charcoal or glowing red wood coals.)

The kits are shipped by truck. As an example of cost, the biggest model, the Mt. Katahdin (6 by 8 ft. and 2,300 lbs.) was shipped to Alaska for \$400. Comes with a 1-year unconditional guarantee.

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