

He Uses Baler To Clean Up Plastic Silage Bags

After bagged silage is fed to cattle, the leftover plastic bags can leave quite a mess. But not at the Columbus, Wis., farm where Kevin Weisensel works. Every spring after the ground firms up, workers bale up the plastic debris.

"You don't have to do anything to the baler," he explains. "Just take the skid loader and stretch the plastic out so it's in a narrow windrow with no big knots. Then just straddle it and the plastic will feed right in."

Weisensel says they spread the plastic on ground sprinkled with lime. Spreading out the

plastic helps shake out debris, so the plastic bales are relatively clean and can be hauled to a local recycling center.

Twine does a good job holding the compacted plastic. Eight 200-ft. rows of 10-ft. bags net three 1,000-lb. bales of plastic.

There's some prep work, Weisensel notes, but the job goes fast, and it's nice to get rid of the plastic debris rather than seeing it blowing around in fields.

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After bagged silage is fed to cattle, Kevin Weisensel stretches the plastic out in a narrow windrow and then uses his round baler to bale it up.

German Dual Fuel Kit Burns Straight Oil In Diesel Engines

"Our message to farmers is that they have the ability to produce their own fuel, saving money and keeping the dollars local. That's huge," says Taavi McMahon, owner of Coulee Region Bio-Fuels. His company has the U.S. and Canadian distributorship for Greasenergy (www.greasenergy.com) a German company that manufactures conversion systems for diesel engines to burn vegetable oil.

McMahon points out that when farms were worked with horses it took about 25 percent of the cropland to grow hay and grain to feed them. By contrast, today a farmer can grow oil-producing crops on 6 to 8 percent of his land to meet all his fuel needs.

The Madison, Wis., based Coulee Region Bio-Fuels sells and installs conversion systems for burning straight vegetable oil. Mechanics have traveled as far as California for installations. For other customers, the company provides information and finds local mechanics for installation. Farmers with mechanical skills do the installation themselves.

Costs vary according to the U.S./Euro exchange rate, but an adapter system costs from \$2,500 to \$3,000, McMahon says.

Installation can cost an additional \$1,000.

Part of the modification is adding an auxiliary tank for the two-fuel system. Diesel is required to start the engine and also kicks in when the oil is cold. Greasenergy systems come with a poly auxiliary tank, but many farmers prefer to fabricate custom tanks to best fit their tractor or machinery.

"They offer trouble-free technology that is computer-controlled. You want complete combustion of the fuel, and that's what the Greasenergy system does best. It takes as much guesswork out of it as can be done," McMahon says, explaining that the system switches automatically between diesel and oil.

The Greasenergy conversion system includes an electrical fuel pump, coolant-water heat exchanger to pre-warm fuel, fuel filter unit, control valve with pressure regulator, heavy-duty relays, pipe set, cabling and instructions.

Coulee Region Bio-Fuels has been working with Organic Valley, the largest cooperative of organic farmers based out of La Farge, Wis. The co-op purchased conversion systems for 3 tractors, 3 trucks and a bus.

McMahon notes that Greasenergy



A Wisconsin company is selling the German-made Greasenergy conversion system, which allows diesel engines to burn straight vegetable oil.

conversion systems work on diesel pickups and cars as well.

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Online Cat Auctions Come To Your Home Or Office

You can get a good deal on a skid steer, dozer or even a bale wagon at Cat Auction Services (CAS). At a recent auction, a 2007 Cat skid steer on tracks sold for \$17,000. A similar unit, but on wheels, was priced at \$26,000 online. A 2005 Deere 650J crawler tractor with 6-way blade and ripper was also a steal at \$45,000. Similar rigs online are listed from \$65,000 to \$76,000.

Best of all, you don't have to leave your house or office because the entire auction takes place online. Of course, if you would rather be on site, you can bid from a seat at an air-conditioned arena with big video screens showing the equipment. Either way, the auction goes fast.

"All our equipment is inspected and filmed while operating on site prior to the auction," says Scott Forke, regional manager, Cat Auction Services. "As a piece of equipment sells, the video is brought up on the screen. The online bidder at home sees the same video."

The CAS website is a good place to go if you're pricing equipment, too. Register at the site, and you can see what equipment sold for at recent auctions, with details on the equipment including photos and video.

Also available to the bidder is an inspection form. Each piece of equipment offered for sale is inspected to Cat used equipment standards. Inspections cover engines, operator station, appearance, hydraulics, drives, electrical systems and more.

"Our philosophy is for the buyer to be completely informed," says Forke. "We are trying to arm the buyer with information on the features and the mechanical condition of

the equipment so they can be more educated when they bid."

The auctions are run by a group of Cat dealers, not Caterpillar corporate. However, the company has provided the use of its name and offers buyers and sellers a variety of services normally provided for used Cat equipment on dealer lots. Services available include financing, equipment protection plans on qualifying Cat equipment, even limited-time offers on Caterpillar work tools for Cat machines purchased at an auction.

Equipment is consigned by Cat customers, not dealers. It's offered on a no bid-in, no buy-back, no minimum or reserve basis. Bidders know they are bidding against each other, not the owner or the auction service, says Forke.

Initially a few Midwestern Cat dealers offered the auctions. Today 18 dealers are involved. In the spring, auctions may be held almost weekly across the country.

Bidders can register the day of the auction. In addition to name and address information, a letter of credit or banking information must be provided.



At www.catauctions.com, the entire auction takes place online. As a piece of equipment comes up for sale, a pre-taped video of it operating is shown.

Prior to auction day, photos of equipment and detailed information, as well as inspection reports, can be reviewed at the auction website. Bidders on site can see the actual equipment prior to the sale. However, once the sale starts, online and on site bidders see the same thing.

Items offered at a recent auction included skid steers, Cat D9 crawlers, bale wagons, skid steer buckets and other tools and various pieces of heavy construction equipment. Several hundred pieces of equipment were offered in all.

People interested in taking part in an auction can register for updates online or request information by mail.

"We have an active mail list and send out brochures on auctions," says Forke. "It's easiest to register online, but you can do it by mail or by phone."

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