

New Way To Break Horses To Drive

Dave McMahan doesn't worry when he takes a newly broke team out in public for the first time. By the time he has finished training his teams on his "breaking cart", they're ready for anything and have spent hours in harness.

"The key to this design is that neither people nor animals can get hurt during the training," says McMahan. "It's a great way to teach people how to drive and horses to work as a team."

The breaking cart has a steel frame with expanded metal floor and front panel. It's built on an old logging truck rear end, complete with hydraulic brakes that allow McMahan to adjust the load to light, medium or heavy draft.

He used 2, 3 and 4-in. steel tubing for the frame and mounted two tires on homemade swivels on the front end. In training mode, the cart is tethered by a 60-ft. long, 4-in. steel tube pole anchored at a center point. The center point is a truck axle buried in concrete with the wheel hub sticking out.

The pole is attached at the hub, while a vertical leg fabricated from 6-in. pipe extends upward about 5 ft. A length of 2 by 2-in. steel tube runs from the top of the pipe to the center point on the pole to brace it.

The pole connects to the center of the cart frame. Aided by a support wheel, it keeps the cart moving in the same path around a 120-ft. diameter circle.

To break a new horse to drive, McMahan first locks the cart in place. This ensures that a horse in training can't take off before it's fully hitched. He then removes the outside shaft of the cart to bring in a trained horse and an untrained horse. Both are cross-tied to the cart behind them with single trees and to the frame ahead of them and to either side at their heads and tails.

"They can't rear at the front or kick up at

the rear," explains McMahan. "If one horse isn't pulling its share, I just detach the other horse's single tree so the first has to pick up the load."

Once the pair is pulling like a team and settled into their job, McMahan has his wife assist. She alternately drives past and at the team with a bike, tractor, truck, car and ATV. Honking, slowing, stopping and speeding up all get the team adjusted to what it may experience on the road while safely retained in harness.

"I keep a chain on the platform with me and shake that every so often, too," says McMahan. "I can rattle it or drop it on the steel floor panel to get them used to random noises."

McMahan uses the cart to train the team to wait in place as well. He can lock the cart and team in place and walk off for a long lunch without concern the team will get hurt.

"They get used to resting in place," he says. "Then when they are ready to take on the road, I can just pull three pins to detach from the center pole and drive away."

McMahan says other unbroken animals can be trained to lead while a team is being trained to drive. He simply ties the lead to the rear of the cart. Hooking a second team to the front of the cart lets him train a set of four to pull together or teach someone to drive a team of four.

"It cost me about \$10,000 to build, but it has been well worth it," says McMahan. "It's so safe, I can have my grandsons up on the cart with me, helping to train a new horse."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, McMahan Mini Mules Farm, 6295 Old Highway 7, Dover, Ark. 72837 (ph 479 264-7247; info@minimulesfarm.com; www.minimulesfarm.com).



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The cart is tethered by a 60-ft. long pole anchored to a truck axle buried in concrete with the wheel hub sticking out.

Double-Duty Seed Gauge Made Of Stainless Steel

"My brother Tim is a farmer and seed dealer. He needed a measuring tool for checking seed placement behind his planter," says Tony Renger of Prairie du Sac, Wis. Renger drew up a simple design for a depth tool from some examples his brother gave him and then cut it out of 14-gauge stainless steel.

The handy depth tool is 8 in. long, 1 in. wide and won't bend under normal use. Tim Renger wanted it to be at least 1/16-in. thick stainless steel because he'd had other depth gauges that were made from thin steel and were quick to rust or bend. "This one will stand up well to normal use unless I use it as a pry bar," he says.

The tool features 1/4-in. depth markings

up to 3 1/2 in. etched into one side. "The depth numerals for 1, 2 and 3 are extra large so farmers can read them without glasses," Tim Renger says. The tool also features his company logo and contact info.

Unlike other depth tools that are only used during planting or shortly thereafter to check plant height, Tim Renger says this design has 'year around versatility'.

"That loop on the top isn't just for hanging it on a bolt in the tractor cab or in the shed. The loop is also a bottle opener. During planting season, if a guy finds out his seed is too deep or too shallow, he can use the gauge to open a bottle of his favorite beverage and just contemplate what to do next. It might

just calm the guy down a little."

"We did this as a favor for Tim," says Tony. "If people are interested in ordering for themselves they should contact Renger Seed and we can easily make them."

Tony Renger runs a business that does custom metal fabrication and specializes in precision stainless steel parts for the meat processing industry, so a company that has experience in stainless steel fabrication builds the tool.

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Handy depth tool is 8 in. long and made of stainless steel so it won't bend under normal use.



McGowan cut 2 large holes in silage wagon's front side where cattle can access mineral.

Silage Wagon Converted Into Mineral Feeder

"A few years ago a friend gave me an old silage wagon. I removed the silage box and running gears and then added another axle to convert it into a 24-ft. tandem axle hay wagon," says James McGowan, Russell Springs, Ky.

"The silage box was in good shape so I pulled it to the back of a field where I converted it into a livestock mineral feeder.

I installed a metal roof and cut 2 large holes in the wagon's front side, which I use to place mineral inside the box. Cattle can easily reach through the holes to access the mineral, and the silage box is built heavy enough that they can't tear it up or turn it over."

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Compression spring holds hitch pin down so it can't shake or rattle.

Spring-Loaded Hitch Pin

"I got tired of having to find a hitch pin whenever I want to hook my tractor up to my wagon, and then having to get down off the tractor to insert a safety hitch pin afterward. So I eliminated both problems in one shot," says Steve Nichols, Galesburg, Ill.

"I bent a length of flat steel, drilled it out, and bolted it to my wagon tongue. I bought a 'compression' spring at Menards and slipped it over the hitch pin, along with a washer and

cotter pin. The spring holds the pin down so it can't shake or rattle. Now the hitch pin can't get misplaced, and there's no need for a safety pin. My spring-loaded hitch pin stays put.

"I welded a curved handle on top of the hitch pin, which makes the pin easier to pull out."

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