Old Grain Drills Make Great Lamb Feeders

Old seed boxes from grain drills help Edward Fett keep lamb creep feed dry, clean and available. The feeders require very little modification. Old drills are cheap, and salvaging the rest of the drill for scrap can often make the feeder cost-free.

"I've tried open bunks and covered bunks, and it's always a problem with lambs getting their front feet into the feed," says Fett. "Once the feed is manure tainted, they often won't eat it. And if they do, they can pick up coccidiosis. Creep rations are too expensive to waste."

Fett looks for grain drills that are at least 10 to 11 ft. long. That lets him position at least 8 feeding stations on one side and 7 on the other. He strips away everything but the bare box with its cover and the hardware that attaches it to the frame. The rest goes for salvage at or above the price that the entire grain drill would bring.

"Scrap dealers often don't want the thin metal of the seed box anyway," notes Fett.

His next step is to cut a 1-in. board to length with a width to match the bottom of the box. He bevels the long edges to match the slope of the box and drops it in place.

Fett uses the original box supports to fashion legs for the feeder. He cuts 4-ft. lengths of cutting edge from old snow blades and welds short strips of steel to match the box support positioning.

"The cutting edge has a curve to it and I place it face down," says Fett. "That keeps it from bothering the lambs' feet."

Fett drills multiple holes in the box support ends. This lets him adjust the height of the feeder by moving bolts that attach the base feet to the box supports.

"I cut 8-in. round holes with a plasma torch 3 1/2 in. above the board with an 8 in. space between them," says Fett. "A regular cutting torch gets the thin steel too hot, and it will warp. It's also easier than trying to cut round holes with a metal saw."

To better cover the feed, Fett attaches four pieces of steel tubing to the seed box covers. These support 38-in. wide sheets of construction steel with self-tapping roofing screws.

"I use light tubing as it only needs to support the sheeting," says Fett. "I put a rod in the center for a handle and round off the sheeting corners for safety."

Staggered holes on opposing sides ensure lambs don't butt heads. Hole placement gives each lamb about 16 in. of space, sufficient for Fett's largest lambs.

Old seed boxes from grain drills help Edward Fett keep lamb creep feed dry and clean. Metal sheets are used to cover the feed.

"We keep our lambs until they are 70 to 90 lbs. before selling them to feedlots for finishing," says Fett. "The 8-in. round hole lets a single lamb's head move in and out easily. The space is enough for them to stand side by side."

The 3 1/2-in. depth combined with the spacing ensures each lamb has access to sufficient feed. Larger sheep can't get their heads inside. Eating with their heads inside the feeder reduces lambs being spooked away from the feeder. It also reduces a tendency to move around and pick over the feed.

"They can't sort through the feed, so they eat what's in front of them," says Fett.

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Staggered holes on opposing sides of box keep lambs from butting heads.

Sam Valdez sells his home-built rock screens for half the price of others on the market. Screen is fitted with tube steel bars set on edge.

Home-Built Screen Separates Rocks, Dirt

Separating rocks from dirt is easy with a rock screen, if you can justify the price. Sam Valdez built his own and now sells them for half the price of others on the market.

"I built one for myself to use around my place," says Valdez. "I had some dirt to move. The rock screen let me separate rock for my road and dirt for gardens."

Valdez's "Grizzly" screen has similar features to others on the market. It's essentially a steel box with one open side and an angled top of 3-in. square, tube steel bars set on edge. Every other bar is welded solid top and bottom to the box's frame. Alternate bars are welded to a bump bar at the top and rest loose at the other end. Bars are set at a slight angle to each other for a 1/2-in. space between them at the top and a 1-in. space at the bottom.

A skid steer or front-end loader scoops up rocky dirt and dumps the load over the screen. While most rocks slide off and dirt falls through into the box, some rocks and dirt can lodge on top of the bars. Valdez simply "bumps" a bar mounted on the underside to lift the alternate bars and shake loose dirt and rock.

"The moveable bars can be removed as a unit to screen out 7-in. or larger boulders and then replaced for finer screening," says Valdez. "They can also be replaced with smaller bars for different rock sizes."

A front-end loader is used to dump the load over an angled screen.

Valdez's Grizzly is 9 ft. wide by 6 ft. deep by 8 ft. high. The screen itself is 9 1/2 ft. by 10 ft. Hooks welded on top of the fixed bars make it easy to lift with a bucket and move into place. The box isn't designed for moving dirt.

"The Grizzly is tougher than rock, yet light enough to be easily moved with a loader," says Valdez. "I put it together for my use and can build them for others, too."

Valdez is pricing his Grizzly at $6,000.

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Ross Wilkinson converted the intake grate from a hydroelectric dam into this gravel screen, mounting it on an upright steel frame that he can back a truck under.

Intake Grate Makes A Great Gravel Screen

"One of the most useful pieces of scrap metal that I ever came across was an intake grate from a hydroelectric dam," says Ross Wilkinson of Thomson Falls, Mont. "I took it home, built a frame for it and made it into a gravel screen."

Wilkinson works for a power company and explains that the intake grates on hydroelectric dams have to be replaced periodically because corrosion can weaken the steel. Like a lot of old steel, however, it can still be re-purposed into something else.

Wilkinson hauled the giant 8 by 16-ft. long grate to his yard and cut it in half with a torch. Then he built an upright frame out of 6 by 6-in. box tubing that he salvaged from an old bridge. After welding cross members at two different levels and angle supports on the corners, he set the intake grate on top, and then bolted it in place. The angled grate now functions as an ideal gravel screen.

"I was rebuilding my pond and needed material screened to a particular size, and this grate fit the bill perfectly," Wilkinson says. "Making the grate and screening the gravel myself cost way less than having that size material hauled in."

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