

Mobile Shade Cloth Keeps Cattle Cool

When Bernard Hand of Fillmore, Ill., decided to raise cattle on organic land 3 years ago, he switched to rotational grazing. He has 2 different cow herds and needed shade for cows, newborn calves and feeder cattle in pastures scattered up to a mile apart.

He and his brother Dennis solved the problem by building a pair of large, portable shade units using shade cloth. One unit extends high above a 1971 Ford truck, and the other mounts above a transport trailer that was flipped upside down to gain more height.

The truck-mounted shade cloth measures 40 ft. sq. while the trailer-mounted shade measures 40 ft. long by 20 ft. wide. A 4-wheeler ATV is used to pull it.

"They look a little odd but they really work well," says Hand. "Our neighbors like to call them experimental aircrafts. We move the shade units every 24 hours to keep the cattle from trampling the grass too much in each area, and to keep manure spread out as much as possible since we don't use any synthetic fertilizer on our pastures. They're lightweight, which makes them easy to move; yet they're heavy enough that cows can't tip

them over.

"During winter, we take the shade cloths and their frames apart and store them in a shed. A local high school boy who's taking welding classes in our local school did much of the welding work, which I greatly appreciated."

They got the shade cloth from a neighbor who was no longer using it. It came in 40 by 20-ft. sections. They used heavy zip ties to tie all the sections to a frame made from light tubing. The tubing bolts to a 2 by 4 wooden frame attached to the floor of the truck bed.

The trailer-mounted shade cloth mounts on a frame made from 1/2-in. rebar, which is welded to a 1-in. dia. steel pipe frame that's welded to the trailer's wheel supports.

"We've used the truck-mounted shade for 3 years and couldn't be happier with it," says Hand. "We built the rotary hoe-mounted shade late last summer so it hasn't gotten much use yet. We got the idea from Joel Salatin in Virginia, who promotes organic farming and first made a portable metal shade cloth unit about 35 years ago.

"The truck-mounted shade cloth is 40 ft.



Bernard Hand built this large, portable shade unit for his cattle. It mounts above a transport trailer. He mounted a second shade unit on top of a 1971 Ford truck.

wide, so driving it down the road can get a little tricky. We drive along one side of the road to avoid contacting electric poles. I thought the shade cloth might tear apart in strong winds, but it hasn't because the wind goes right through it. The truck unit has a high

center of gravity and the truck has a narrow wheelbase so I drive really slow."

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Nifty Way To Bundle, Palletize Firewood

We spotted this firewood handling idea in Europe. PackFix mechanically creates a palletized bundle of firewood that's about 4 ft. in dia. and 5 ft. tall. Each bundle of wood is securely wrapped with plastic netting so pallets can be handled mechanically and stacked up to 3 high for storage.

"This is one of the most innovative and efficient tools for handling firewood that I've ever seen," says Len Christianson, who supplies firewood to homeowners in northern Minnesota. Although Christianson doesn't own the equipment, he viewed the website video and was sold on its ease of operation, its ability to bundle and palletize wood in a single step, and the fact that wood is wrapped in open netting, allowing it to dry after being bundled. "This equipment would cut our hand labor in half and allow us to store, load, unload and handle wood mechanically," Christianson says. "One person could deliver pallets of wood with a trailer and skid steer and take the place of two people that are doing that now."

The PackFix drum sets under a sturdy metal frame with a winch that raises and lowers the drum after it's filled. The drum can be filled with pieces of split firewood 8 to 20 in. long by hand or with a conveyor. When the drum is full, the operator raises it with the remote-controlled winch while a wrapping arm automatically circles the drum and applies plastic netting. When the drum



PackFix mechanically creates a palletized bundle of firewood that's securely wrapped with plastic netting.

clears the top of the bundle the net is cut and tied to secure the bundle on the pallet.

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"Tube Scoop" Picks Up Walnuts

"My 'tube scoop' makes it easy to pick walnuts up off the ground. It glides over my lawn with ease," says William Yewell, Ogden, Iowa.

Made from 4-in. dia. thin wall plastic pipe, the scoop measures 36 in. long and is capped at one end. An A-shaped aluminum pipe handle is bolted to the ends of the pipe. Yewell simply pulls the tube along the ground to scoop up nuts.

"It's easy to use and saves a lot of time. I can make 2 or 3 passes without any walnuts falling out," says Yewell. "I don't have to bend over at all. It'll hold about 40 walnuts, which is a lot more than commercial wire basket scoops can hold. When the scoop is full I just dump the nuts into a bucket."

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William Yewell's "tube scoop" is open at one end. He simply pulls the tube along the ground to scoop up nuts.

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