

## Home-Built Slicer Helps Fatten Angus With Apples

When Steve Gilbertson slices apples he doesn't mess around. He pours 5 gal. of apples at a time into a chute that feeds them into 18 vertically spinning table saw blades powered by a 1 hp motor. The slices land in a bin that Gilbertson moves with his skid loader to feed fresh to 30 Angus cattle.

"They go wild for apples," Gilbertson says. "They fatten and marble with apples from the sugar content (and about 100 calories/apple).

The Browerville, Minn., producer feeds 15 lbs. of apples/head/day as long as his supply holds up. In 2014, the apple diet only went through mid-December because of hail in the summer causing the apples to deteriorate faster. Most had to be fed fresh.

Gilbertson explains that he planted more than 2,000 apple trees over the past several years planning to sell apples retail. When he realized the market was weak in his area, he began selling them wholesale to family members' businesses located closer to the Twin Cities' retail market. He started feeding apples that didn't sell to cattle in 2010.

Since cattle can choke on apples, Gilbertson

realized he had to slice them up. He did it by hand at first. It didn't take him long to mechanize. He figured out a design and approached students at a local technical college who built the slicer. It's more of a prototype, but it works, slicing apples at the rate of 20 bushels per hour, he says.

He has a large cooler and cold storage area. He raises several apple varieties that ripen early, mid-season and late-season, including consumer favorites such as the Honeycrisp and SweeTango.

Gilbertson notes that currently beef prices are high on the conventional market. Should prices drop, he plans on marketing his cattle as value-added because they are grass-fed on 190 acres and apple-finished from 10 acres of apple trees following organic practices. Gilbertson also sells apple trees in the spring.

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Gilbertson pours 5 gal. of apples at a time into a chute that feeds into 18 vertically spinning table saw blades. The slices land in a bin that he moves with his skid loader to feed to his cattle.



## "Leaf Saver" Solves Problem With Deere Big Round Balers

When it comes to hay, Ted Lacey and his son, Andrew, don't like to waste a sprig - or leaf. The inventors/builders of the Hay Manager (featured in the 2015 Best of FARM SHOW) also make and sell the Leaf Saver for many models of Deere big round hay balers (models 410 to 569) and Case IH's 8950 baler.

"There's a gap and the hay and stems go into the baler, but the leaves stay on the guards and fall between the rear axle and pickup head," Ted Lacey explains. "The Leaf Saver stops that, 100 percent."

He says that leaves can add as much as an extra 100 lbs./bale harvested under some

conditions and greatly add to the relative feed value since leaves have much higher protein levels than stems. That means a fast payback on the \$200 the Laceys charge for the two metal plates of the Leaf Saver that mount easily within an hour.

Currently available direct from the company, Lacey welcomes dealer inquiries.

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"Leaf Saver" fills a gap to keep hay leaves from falling between baler's rear axle and pickup head.



Scott Ravenkamp uses old conveyor belting to protect his planter from stalk damage (left). He also uses 55-gal. plastic drums to make auger hoppers.



## Many Uses For Conveyor Belting

Scott Ravenkamp kept the previous year's residue out of his planter with pieces of used conveyor belt. The tough belting stood up well to tough stalks and protected vital parts before finally tearing in half along an old wear line.

"If you are running a planter into standing stalks, protection is a must," says Ravenkamp. "The belt stopped the damage stalks were doing to drives, wiring harnesses and fertilizer tubing."

Ravenkamp raises dryland corn and wheat in eastern Colorado. The marginal returns don't justify rolling corn residue before planting.

"If you can run with the combine, stalks aren't as much of a problem," he says. "With our 12-row corn head and 24-row planter, we are constantly running against cornstalks with half the planter."

Ravenkamp had been searching for a way to protect his planter when he ran across

the conveyor belt at Repurposed Materials, a national leader in finding new uses for everything from salvaged wood to fish nets and fire hose (www.repurposedmaterialsinc.com; ph 303 321-1471). Heavy-duty rubber conveyor belt is available in widths ranging from 18 to 96 in. and lengths of up to 841 ft. Steel cable reinforced belting is also frequently available.

"I tried metal pushers mounted with row cleaners, but I needed something for between the row units well," says Ravenkamp. "The belting worked real well. I just wired it ahead of the planter units and to the planter frame about every 18 in."

Since the first set of belting tore in half, Ravenkamp is working on a different mounting system. He is considering hangers to allow easy removal of the belting.

"When we are planting into wheat stubble, we don't need the belting," says Ravenkamp. Ravenkamp also uses belting to protect

## Conveyor Belts Great For Farm Use

Kevin Birschbach knows lots of ways conveyor belts can be recycled on farms, from pit covers to cow mats, water diversion and more. Some use them as fences to break the line-of-sight for confined livestock. Others use them to cover grain dumping pits.

Unlike most commercial covers that are light and can blow away, the recycled conveyor belt stays in place. Installation couldn't be simpler. Just lay it in place. It is available in a large variety of widths, lengths, materials and plies. It can be custom cut to size for any application. All belting is carefully inspected. Voids, checking and overall quality are shared with the customer.

The belting has found a ready market in livestock housing, according to Birschbach. It's popular for horse stall mats and barn aisle matting, as well as sheep and pigpen lining and kennel mats.

Other uses include toolbox liners, anti-fatigue and vibration floor mats, dock bumpers and landscape edging.

"We ship worldwide," says Birschbach. "Whether you're looking for scrap belting by the pound or custom cut, rubber mats, we can accommodate any and all needs."

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Worn conveyor belts can be used on the farm in many different ways, says Atlas Belting.

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aeration fans on his grain bins. He cuts a length to match the fan circumference and ties it in place.

"The belting keeps the motors from 'coasting' when not in use and helps keep moisture out," says Ravenkamp. "When we run the fans, we drop it to the ground and it stays there."

He has also found new uses for 55-gal.

plastic drums. "We use them to make auger hoppers," says Ravenkamp. "They work better than anything we can buy new and can be modified to fit different auger setups."

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