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Reader Inquiry No. 126



To keep the cutterbar clean on his New Holland mower, Dale Rogers modified the air reel from an old combine and then added a blower off a Gleaner sidehill combine.



To mount the air reel, he fabricated a support using the boom off an old crop sprayer. "If the boom hits a solid object, it's designed to break away," says Rogers.

## He Uses Air Power To Keep Cutterbar Clean

Dale Rogers uses air pressure to keep his cutterbar clean. The retired farmer and avid ultralight pilot keeps his runways clipped, and the short grass can clog up a cutterbar.

"I noticed that if mowing into a strong wind, the air kept the cutterbar clean," says Rogers. "I figured an artificial wind would work just as well."

So he picked up an air reel from a junked combine and modified it to match his 9-ft. New Holland mower. A blower for the air reel was salvaged from an L Gleaner sidehill model.

The New Holland was ideal for the retrofit as the drive pulley for the sickle bar is mounted to a pto shaft that extends out from the pulley. Designed to allow a second mower to be connected in series, it was perfect for mounting a drive pulley to the air reel blower.

"I used a 16-in. pulley for the drive and a 4-in. pulley on the blower, but I'm going to replace the drive with a 19-in. pulley for more air power," explains Rogers.

Rogers mounted the blower to the mower frame. To mount the air reel, he fabricated a support boom using a length of boom support from an old crop sprayer.

Rogers first mounted a stub shaft to either end of the cut down air reel. Adjustable pipe in pipe shafts mounted to the stubs and to knuckles on either end of the cutterbar keep the air reel and tubes in position. A turnbuckle on the mower frame end lets Rogers adjust the distance of the tubes from the cutterbar.

"The boom mount is designed to let it pivot vertically and horizontally," explains Rogers. "If the bar hits a solid object, it's designed to break away. The boom mount lets the air reel break away with it."

The support boom pivots on a double action mount at the mower frame. At the far end of the cutterbar, the air reel is suspended from the boom by chain links. The links provide added flexibility when the boom lifts the air reel.

To get the double action pivot, Rogers mounted a square tube with a yoke end to the mower frame as a vertical leg. A short length of pipe on a bolt through the yoke serves as a bearing for vertical pivots. A steel rod welded to the pipe extends up and through a short length of pipe welded to the ends of the support boom. That length of pipe serves as a bearing for horizontal pivots.

Lift is provided by a heavy-duty coil spring mounted from the mower frame to the end of the rod. When the cutterbar is in use, the spring is extended. As the cutterbar lifts, the spring contracts, lifting the boom.

"The trickiest part was getting the lift while keeping it in line with the mower," says Rogers, who started flying ultralight aircraft when he turned 60. He has two 1/4mile runways.

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