

Heat from skid loader engine is trapped by a metal box and delivered through four 3-in. dia. plastic pipes. Pipes fit into holes in top of box and a plexiglass screen that snaps onto back of cab.



“Piped-In” Cab Heater For Case Skid Loader

Mark Majerus couldn't find a commercial heater for his 1986 Case 1835B skid loader, so he came up with his own design that makes use of heat coming off the engine.

“It lets me work in comfort and produces so much heat that even though I'm only capturing part of the engine's heat I can take my jacket off, even on the coldest days,” says Majerus, Farmington, Minn.

He used 1/8-in. thick steel to make a rectangular box the width of the grill on back of the engine and drilled four 3 1/2-in. dia. holes into the top side. The box, which is open on the bottom, hooks onto a pair of metal brackets on back of the skid loader door.

Then he made a plexiglass window that snaps into the back of the cab and has 4

corresponding 3-in. dia. holes cut into the bottom side. He bought four 3-in. dia. ABS plastic elbow pipes that fit into the holes in both the box and the plexiglass.

Homemade adapters are screwed on inside the box to hold the pipes. “I cut threaded couplings in half and then screwed each half coupling to a male adapter. The pipes fit onto the adapters similar to threading a bolt onto a nut,” says Majerus.

“To attach the window I welded 2 bolts onto either side that fit into corresponding holes in the skid loader's frame.”

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Fitted bed sheet slips over corners of tailgate, with excess material tucked between pickup bed and tailgate before it's closed.

Bed Sheet Seals Pickup Tailgate

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Need a simple way to stop corn and other loose material from trickling out of the gaps between your pickup box and tailgate? I use an old fitted bed sheet. Slip it over the corners of the tailgate and tuck the excess material between the pickup bed and the tailgate before closing it.

The top side of the sheet flops a little when driving, but the elastic corners stay on the tailgate when the pickup box is loaded.

When unloading, leave the sheet on the tailgate to catch the remaining corn, gravel, or whatever you're handling and then simply pull it off once you're mostly unloaded.

I keep a sheet under the back seat of my pickup so I'm ready any time I need to haul loose material.

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An old forage wagon spreads an even swath of straw on Dan Brouwer's strawberries. Wagon's extended discharge chute is the same width as a row of strawberries.

Silage Wagon Covers Strawberries

“My 40-year-old Gehl forage wagon really simplifies one of the most time-consuming jobs we have,” says Minnesota strawberry farmer Dan Brouwer. “It eliminates a lot of hand labor and spreads a nice even swath of straw on our berries.”

Brouwer bought 2 old Gehl forage boxes online expecting to use one for spreading and the other for parts. He extended the discharge chute on one of the wagons by welding on pieces of scrap metal and covering them with round heating duct. The 24-in. wide chute is the same width as a row of strawberries. A plywood shield on the outside keeps material in a nice even windrow as straw is spread over the berries each fall. Brouwer also added rafter-like boards on top to hold extra straw bales.

“The wagon works great and the self-unloading saves us a lot of time getting on and off the tractor to fork straw on the rows,” says Brouwer's wife Sarah, who along with their 5 children, do plenty of the field work on their farm. “All this setup requires is removing the twine so it doesn't get caught in the unloading beaters.”

The Brouwers use cover crops and grazing to improve production on their 12-acre irrigated farm. They rotate production so

six acres are in berry production each year 3 acres have young plants, and 3 acres are used as pasture for 8 head of cattle. They plant cover crops of rye, sorghum-sudan, red clover, daikon radish and winter peas on the pasture.

“The cattle get a small section each day so they have to eat everything in the area, not just what they like,” Sarah says. “In about a week they graze it clean and their hooves provide ‘natural’ tillage, gently pressing organic matter into the ground. Studies have shown that this method really activates soil biology.”

Once the acreage is completely grazed, it's tilled and re-planted.

Using this efficient straw spreading method, the cover crop and grazing rotation has helped the Brouwers more than double the size of their berry production in just a few years, and yields have almost tripled. “It's just incredible how the system pays off in yields,” says Sarah. “The berries are large, lush and very flavorful.”

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