



A small 12-volt air compressor pressurizes a 4-ft. length of 4-in. dia. pvc tubing. The homemade foam marker mounts on back of Ruffin's grain drill.

## Made-It-Myself Foam Marker

"I don't farm a lot of acres so I couldn't see myself spending up to \$400 on a commercial foam marker for my grain drill. Instead, I made my own," says John Ruffin, Yatesville, Georgia.

He started with a 4-ft. length of 4-in. dia. pvc tubing and installed a cleanout "T" near one end to add water and foam agent. End caps enclose both ends of the tube. He drilled a hole in the "T" end of the tube and threaded it, then installed a 1/2 to 3/8-in. dia. MIP adapter that connects up to a 12-volt portable air compressor mounted behind the drill.

He also capped and threaded the other end of the tube and installed an adapter for a 3/8-in. dia. nipple. Foam comes out of a 10-in. length of flexible plastic tubing attached to the nipple.

"It works like a charm. I can plug the compressor into my tractor's power connector or clamp it directly to the battery," says Ruffin. "It really comes in handy when reseeding pastures or hay fields, where it's not always easy to see where I've already planted. I go clockwise around the pasture and the foam drops down behind the tire. I



Foam comes out of a 10-in. length of flexible plastic tubing attached to a nipple on tube.

elevated the foam-producing end of the tube on a pair of wooden blocks in order to keep water from shooting out of the tube along with the foam."

Ruffin says it doesn't take much pressure to push foam out of the tube and through the nipple, so a small compressor works fine. "You can buy portable compressors like mine at Walmart for \$15 or \$20. I think the same idea would also work on a small sprayer."

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With 28 replaceable and adjustable screening bars, the Versa Rake can screen material down to 1/2 in. Works great to shake out the dirt when picking up rocks.



## Skid Steer Bucket Acts Like A Sieve

How about this – a new skid loader-mounted attachment that can pick rocks, sift topsoil, spread gravel, and do construction cleanup.

Called the Versa Rake, it features a replaceable cutting blade and 28 replaceable screening bars made from hardened steel. The screening bars can screen material down to 1/2 in., so if you want to clean rocks as you pick them you can shake out the dirt and lay the rocks back down relatively clean.

The bars are secured by a steel plate that bolts onto each side of the attachment. To adjust the bar spacing you remove one of the plates and remove as many bars out as you want, depending on the project. "Most

customers start out keeping every third bar and then add bars back to get the best results," says the company.

The Versa Rake is available in 60, 72, and 80-in. widths. The 80-in. model retails for \$4,250.

The same rake is also available in a more compact 36 or 42-in. size called the Versa Mini. It has 15 screening bars. The 36-in. model retails for \$2,195.

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Photo courtesy Louise Liebenberg, www.Grazerie.com

Reaching weights of 140 lbs. or more, Shar guardian dogs are very protective of livestock and also make good family companions.

## Bosnian Guard Dogs Make Good Family Pets, Too

Unlike many livestock guardian breeds, Sharplaninas (Shars) make good human companions as well as livestock protectors. Allison Chapman, a Shar breeder from northeast Pennsylvania, suspects it is because the dogs are brought into their native villages in Bosnia and Kosovo at night.

"They roam around the villages as perimeter guards and get food from the villagers," says Chapman. "While the old line of thought with livestock guardian breeds is for owners to not bond with them, Shars need the human bond."

The retired police operations manager and major worked in the Balkans and later in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Ukraine as a security consultant. It was in 1995 in the Balkans that she was introduced to Shars.

Shars are large longhairs, reaching weights of 140 lbs. or more. They have an expected working life of 8 to 10 years with an average age of 13. Chapman has seen no hip dysplasia problems common to purebred large breeds. She expects that is due to natural selection in their rugged native terrain.

"They are defensive animals. However, if they decide a threat exists, you won't be able to call them off," says Chapman. "They will go after the threat and dispatch it if it doesn't retreat or submit."

After seeing them in action with predators as well as with people, she decided to open a kennel in Pennsylvania for the rare breed. She is one of a handful of Shar breeders in the U.S. and Canada. She estimates there may be 200 or fewer working Shars in North America. She would like to see more, given their attributes.

"They are very intelligent animals with very strong guardian instincts," says Chapman. "They still require supervision, correction, leadership and patience to develop their innate instincts."

For Chapman's dogs, that begins at birth. She is with the puppies 24/7 their first 4 weeks. This is to get them used to people. She also puts sheep wool in the whelping area so they become familiar with the smell and texture. If they want to chase a cat or other animal, she discourages it and uses positive reinforcement to counter the natural desire.

"Over time, they recognize that the animals on our farm are their animals and protect them," she says. "We have chickens on the farm, and we haven't lost one to a predator in 7 years. To train them for sheep, I advise putting them in an enclosure with the flock

where they can bond. They have to be supervised so they don't play with the sheep, chasing or licking them."

Puppies are available no earlier than 10 weeks of age. However, not just anyone can buy a Shar from Chapman. She suggests prospective buyers come to her kennel to experience the 140-lb. animals.

"I want to meet the people and vet them very carefully to know they have the means and facility to care for the animals, as well as the patience and leadership traits to work with them," she says. "I don't sell to first time big breed owners."

Buyers are required to sign a contract. They agree to stay in touch with Chapman for the life of the animal, sharing health, diet and longevity data with her.

Buyers may or may not be allowed to breed the puppies they buy, as a neutering or spaying requirement may be part of the contract. This can be determined by the fitness of the animal or Chapman's view of the buyer.

"If a buyer has had large dogs before and worked with livestock guardian dogs, I will encourage them to breed theirs," she says. "If they aren't experienced or knowledgeable, I won't sell breeding rights."

If Chapman believes you would make a good owner, prices range from \$900 for a single to \$2,500 for a working pair. A working group can sell for \$5,000 to \$7,000.

Chapman says the large dogs are adaptable. She knows of dogs that were 4 to 5 years old before any exposure to livestock, yet they still developed into good guardians. She says they are equally good as family companions. In fact, she says she has sold an equal number of dogs for companions as for livestock guardians. However, being a companion doesn't mean they forget their protective role.

"If you are with me around my dogs, you're fine," she says. "However, I wouldn't want a stranger coming on the property when I'm not here."

For this reason, she posts her property against trespassing, warning there is a guardian dog on the premises. She also does not give out her address, reducing the chance of people stopping by without contacting her first.

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