

He Builds Old-Style Sheep Wagons

Old-style sheep wagons make idyllic guest cabins or can give cattle ranchers a place to stay during calving season when predators are a problem.

Dan Rench specializes in building sheep wagons that look like ones commonly used more than a century ago. Built mostly of oak, they are sturdy and well designed, with enough space to eat, sleep and clean up.

Rench is very familiar with sheep wagons, because his Riverton, Wyo., ranch family raised sheep and hired Peruvian shepherds to live in wagons and protect the flocks. When his family sold the sheep, Rench, decided to renovate the six wagons owned by his family. He discovered there was a demand for them and started renovating other people's wagons and building new ones.

"The average size is 12 ft. long by 74 or 76 in. wide, and they are built on 3 types of frames," Rench says. "Some people want the old spoke wheel running gear under the wagon. Some want rubber tires where the front wheels turn. The most popular are the ones with an axle and tongue that go down

the highway faster."

The oak bows in the design give Rench's wagon the authentic look, he says. About half of his customers want a sheep wagon for sentimental reasons whether it's one they've had in the family that he restores or a new one built like one they had. The rest of his customers use them for practical purposes, such as staying in them when guarding sheep or cattle.

"Many of these old wagons were built in 1900 and are still in use. They were the old wagons pioneers came west in," Rench explains.

While he insulates and customizes them – one was 18 ft. long with a screened porch, for example – Rench avoids making them too "camper-like."

The wagons sell for \$7,000-\$12,000. "I can usually make one in 1 1/2 months," he says. "I just enjoy doing this in my spare time."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dan Rench, 685 Burma Rd., Riverton, Wyo. 82501 (ph 307 856-0312; mjrench@wyoming.com).



Dan Rench specializes in building sheep wagons that look like ones commonly used more than a century ago.



Wagons have enough space inside to eat, sleep and clean up. They can be finished off nicely with wood trim.

Snowblower Converted To Mini Tracked Bulldozer

"My 4-year-old son Matthew loves to drive it. I'm really happy with how it turned out," says Randy Brancheau, Lachine, Mich., who converted a tracked walk-behind snowblower into a kid-size, ride-on bulldozer.

The mini tracked bulldozer is equipped with a 27-in. blade and the seat off a riding mower. It's painted green and yellow.

Brancheau built it last winter and says his son has already had a lot of fun operating it. "I hear from Matthew every day how much he likes to plow snow with it, and I made a video of him at work. He raises or lowers the blade by pulling on a lever and steers by maneuvering a pair of levers. It has 4 forward gears and one reverse. I didn't modify the snowblower's original friction disc drive system at all."

Brancheau says he got the idea a long time ago but was only recently able to make it happen.

"I work at a small engine shop and always thought it would be neat to convert a tracked walk-behind snowblower. However, it wasn't until last fall that we got a trade-in – a 15-year-old Cub Cadet equipped with a Tecumseh 9 hp, pull-start engine. I built the blade and mounting arms, seat mounting brackets, and operator platform, mostly using scrap metal that I already had. I took photos of the building process from the first day I started building it until I took it out of the shop."

He stripped the snowblower down to the engine, tracks and drive system. He turned the engine around to face backward, which

switched the direction of the gears. He replaced the steering controls with a pair of pipe levers that attach to the snowblower's steering cables. A foot pedal is used to engage the machine's drive pulley.

The blade was fashioned from a piece of curved scrap steel. It's welded to a pair of tubular steel arms that are welded to the snowblower's weight transfer lever, originally used to raise or lower the snowblower's impeller.

Brancheau added one last touch to complete the conversion – a tractor muffler with a home-built rain cap and flapper.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Randy Brancheau, 11031 M 32 W, Lachine, Mich. 49753 (ph 989 657-9067; sawwrench43@gmail.com).



Four-year-old Matthew Brancheau loves to drive the mini tracked bulldozer that his dad built out of a tracked walk-behind snowblower.

Whole Hog Rotisserie Turns Very Slow

Richard Berry built a rotisserie that is heavy duty enough to turn a whole hog. It took a lot of trial and error, but with the help of 2 gearboxes along with 6 sprockets and pulleys, the 1,725-rpm shaft on the electric motor turns the hog just once every 4 1/2 min.

"Two of my friends liked to roast whole hogs, but they would have to turn the spit by hand for 6 to 8 hrs.," says Berry. "They had to deal with smoke, wind and rain from 3 or 4 a.m. when they started the fire until the hog was done."

Determined to make life easier on his friends, he knew gear reduction was the big challenge. He checked with suppliers like Granger before turning to his "resource" pile.

"New gearboxes ran \$300 to \$400," says Berry. "I had a big cast iron 36:1 gear reduction out of an ice crusher. I also had a gear reduction motor from a pizza crust rolling machine."

The pizza crust gear reducer was mounted with an electric motor to a heavy-duty base. After stripping them off, he remounted them to the base, along with the ice crusher

reduction gear motor, using galvanized steel pipe for the turning rods.

"I spent about a week working on it," says Berry. "At first I tried figuring out ratios mathematically, and then I went to trial and error."

After trying different pulleys on the electric motor and the 2 gear reducers, he ended up alternating 1 1/2 to 2-in. pulleys with 10-in. pulleys. When he had everything right, he calculated that the shaft on the electric motor turned 7,762 1/2 times for each turn of the spit.

"I rigged up 2 homemade jack stands for the pipe with the pig on it. Everything came out of my 'resource' pile. I don't think I spent more than \$10 total."

"It has worked great for many years," says Berry. "The pigs come out beautifully with the constant and consistent turning. The pig skin is crisp like a potato chip."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Richard W. Berry, P.O. Box 6082, Los Osos, Calif. 93412 (ph 805 748-4501).



With the help of 2 gear reduction motors and 6 sprockets, Richard Berry built this whole hog rotisserie. It turns hog just once every 4 1/2 min.