

Arch Makes Log Retrieval Easy

Getting big bales and logs back to his farm was a hassle until Matt Eby rebuilt a flatbed trailer, adding an arch for logs.

"We've hauled about 20 tons of logs and, with the arch removed, about 80 tons of hay," says Eby. "I bought the trailer from a farmer and did a complete rebuild, adding new axles and later incorporating the arch.

"I got the arch idea from a Matt Cremona YouTube video," says Eby. "It lets me load big logs without my skid steer."

Eby mounted a 12,000-lb. winch at the front of the trailer. To protect it from the weather, he used a toolbox, cutting a slot in the back of it for the cable exit. He also added a battery box ahead of the winch.

The arch mounts on bed brackets that fit into existing trailer pockets at the rear of the trailer. The brackets pin in place with conventional hitch pins.

Each bracket top consists of a set of steel plates welded at the rear and drilled to create a pivot point for the arch. A piece of steel tubing welded to the plate ahead of the pivot point was opened up to create a short open track for the end of a spring shock to ride in. The other end of the shock is pinned to a bracket on the front side of the arch. A retainer made from steel channel iron also pins to the arch bracket, as well as to the forward end of the bed bracket. When pinned, it locks the arch in vertical position for transport.

"The spring shocks prevent the arch from slamming forward and, with their 500-lb. lift, allow me to raise the arch into the vertical position with one arm before locking the

retainer in place," says Eby. "With the retainer removed, the arch has about 115 degrees of movement."

The arch stands 74 in. tall and 94 in. wide. It is fabricated out of 1/4-in. thick, 2 by 5-in. rectangular tubing. Gusset plates reinforce both angled corners to either side of the arch. A steel ring at the center of the arch is the anchor point for the winch hook. Two short lengths of steel tubing welded to the rear of the arch serve as bumpers between it and the trailer frame.

To load logs, Eby connects the winch hook to the arch and removes the retainer, allowing the arch to angle to the rear as he lets out cable. With a log chained to the arch, Eby winches the arch upright and forward, pulling the log onto the trailer bed. He then repeats the process as needed until the log is in place.

"The biggest log we've lifted yet is a 1,650-lb. white pine," says Eby.

To remove the arch, he simply pulls the pivot pins on the arch itself and then pulls the 2 pins holding each bracket in place.

"I used about \$100 of steel from a nearby scrap yard for the arch and spent about \$100 on the load assist springs," says Eby. "The winch setup cost about \$600. The entire trailer cost about \$1,000. I've seen ads for small trailers with a hydraulic boom selling for \$25,000 or more."

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Matt Eby loads logs onto rebuilt flatbed trailer using a 12,000-lb. winch connected to a pivoting steel arch. Log is chained to arch (left) and then arch is winched upright and forward to pull log onto trailer. A steel retainer and spring shock pin attach to both sides of arch.



McLae removed the teeth from an old manure grapple fork, then welded steel tubing supports in place and slipped 1 7/8-in. high strength steel teeth into them.

He Beefed Up Manure Grapple Fork To Handle Bigger Loads

Dale McLae turned an old manure grapple fork into a log lifting, industrial strength grapple. The old skid steer grapple fork was headed for the scrap yard when McLae bought it for \$200.

"I bought it from a neighbor to use for moving slab boards and small logs," says McLae. "It was a disaster at first. The 1-in. square teeth were too light and would bend like petunias in the wind when lifting odd shape logs, so I decided to fix it."

The fix consisted of removing the old teeth and making a template on the steel frame for new teeth. He cut out holes for 4 heavy-duty supports with a plasma cutter. The supports were 2-in. (ID) heavy walled, steel tubing that McLae ran through walls at the front and back sides of the grapple fork frame.

"I welded them in place and then added gussets between them and the back of the frame for added strength," says McLae. "I

did have to mill the pipes out a little so the new teeth would fit."

The new teeth are 1 7/8-in. (OD) high strength steel and slip into the supports. The pipe supports stick out about 1 1/2 in. from the front side of the frame.

"I drilled holes through the supports and the new teeth and secured them with 3/8-in. bolts," says McLae. "If the teeth do get damaged, I can remove them easily."

McLae says the bulked-up grapple fork has worked great for removing brush piles, logs, slab wood and scrap of all types. He is quite satisfied with his scrapyard save.

"I had to purchase new materials for the teeth and the teeth holders," says McLae. "I probably have \$400 total invested in it."

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No Drill Needed To Reseed Pastures

When it comes to reseeding and regenerating his pastures, Russ Wilson lets his cattle do the work. Not only do they reseed, but they also fertilize at the same time, and they keep fence lines free of grass.

"I feed the herd a mineral mix daily, spreading it in a line alongside a fence," explains Wilson. "When I want to reseed a particular pasture, I mix grass seed with the mineral about 48 hrs. before moving them into that paddock. It takes about that long for the seed to pass through the cow. I do have to take care to be sure the grass seed isn't treated."

He notes that when the cow deposits the seed with her manure, it has already started to germinate. In his biologically active pastures, dung beetles, earthworms and others quickly break down the manure, leaving the grass seed to root and grow.

"Another benefit of feeding the mineral in the fence line is the cows clean up the grass there," says Wilson. "Other grazers have to trim fence lines or spray herbicides. I let the cattle do it."

Wilson grazes his cattle on stockpiled grass for much of the winter. When he does feed hay, he does so on fields that need the manure and may need to be reseeded.

As he only feeds hay for around 35 days each winter, he buys hay rather than bale it himself. He prefers lower quality, rougher hay that often has gone to seed before it is baled, and not just for its lower cost.

"I save on equipment costs, diesel fuel and time," explains Wilson. "Plus when I feed the hay, the seeds and manure get spread. Any hay not eaten, also breaks down to supply nutrients to the pasture."

Wilson uses the same concepts of cattle



To reseed a pasture, Wilson just mixes grass seed with a mineral mix and spreads it alongside a fence.

seeding in the late summer. He will move cattle back and forth from a paddock that has matured and gone to seed to ones that need reseeding.

"I'll graze them on grass that has gone to seed for a few hours and then into an area that needs the seed," says Wilson. "Over a few days, wherever manure drops, so does seed. Even though it may be July or August, the manure holds moisture for the seed to get started."

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