

The Jacksons converted a chemical tote into a mobile mineral feeder for their cattle, making it easy to haul and move salt and minerals.



Used Tote Makes Handy Mineral Feeder

Moving salt and mineral every time cattle are moved to new pasture got easier for Becky Jackson when she and her husband, Mel, built an inexpensive mobile feeder.

"I love to repurpose, and chemical totes work great for this," she says. The totes are plentiful near their Lewistown, Mont., ranch, and they had the running gear and wheels from an old unused auger.

Mel cut openings in 3 sides of the tote with a reciprocating saw to remove the metal tubes and plastic walls. Using scraps of angle iron, he welded several supports across the running gear to support the tote. With a modified hitch, Becky can move it anywhere with a 4-wheeler.

"I put 100 lbs. of salt and 100 lbs. of mineral in it," she says, noting she monitors it closely. With a large herd it's important to never let the salt and mineral run out to prevent cattle from fighting to get their heads through one of the three openings.

Cattle are strong enough to move the

feeder, so she steadies it with a jack, and sometimes chocks the wheels with blocks.

"I try to place the mineral feeder where I want the cows to trample out things like buck brush," she adds. She positions the closed end of the tote on the side of prevailing winds to prevent rain from getting inside. If water does get in, the open valve at the bottom of the tote drains it.

Besides using the feeder for nutrients for their cattle, the Jacksons also hang fly bullets with insecticide in the openings that rub on the sides of the cows' necks.

In its third year, the feeder is holding up well and Becky appreciates not having to lift salt troughs when moving the cattle.

"The biggest thing is that this is on wheels. I just hook on with the 4-wheeler and it's so convenient," she says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Becky and Mel Jackson, Lewistown, Mont. (lazyjk9723@gmail.com).

ChickSafe battery-operated door openers have only one mechanical part.



New Automatic Coop Door Opener

The ChickSafe door from Brinsea lets chickens out in the morning and shuts them in at night. The door opener has no mechanical switches and just one moving part that lifts the door. It relies on gravity to close the door; microprocessors do the rest.

The 2-stage door openers are available on their own or with 2-piece doors that open to 22 by 13 in. The 2-panel aluminum doors are 11 3/4 by 7 1/4 in. and mount in 22-in. high pvc runners. However, the opener can operate any sliding, vertical door from 10 oz. up to 9 lbs.

The battery-powered ChickSafe door openers are available in 2 models, the Eco and the Advance. The Eco uses light levels alone to trigger the door to open or release it to close. The software looks for long term light level changes, ensuring the door won't open when exposed to passing car headlights.

An indicator light visible up to 100 yards away warns if battery power is low or if the door has jammed.

The Advance, with its digital display, takes the Eco features to another level. It adds

a timer and manual override functions to program different opening times on different days. It also offers manual opening and closing control. A weekend "lie-in" feature delays the opening of the door on 2 days out of 7.

ChickSafe door openers are made in the U.K. and start at \$99.99. A complete Advance opener with door kit is priced at \$219.99 but was on sale midsummer at \$199.99. They are only available online or from the Brinsea Products catalog. They come with 4 AA batteries expected to last a year or more.

Brinsea offers a range of products from software and books to incubators and brooders. The company website includes extensive how-to resources for bird and egg production. Catalogs are available in print and digital format.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Brinsea Products, 704 N. Dixie Ave., Titusville, Fla. 32796 (ph 321 267-7009; toll free 888 667-7009; sales@brinsea.com; www.brinsea.com).

Farmer-Branded Bourbon In The Works

Russell Hedrick has partnered with a local distillery to turn his organic corn into whiskey. Now the North Carolina farmer has a plan to link other farms to create a national brand of spirits.

"We are exploring the use of either Farmers Distillery or Farmers Reserved Distillery as the name," says Hedrick. "Our vision is to build a company that will positively affect the bottom line of farmers who work with us."

Hedrick and a group of about 10 other farmers heading up the project all use no-till, cover crops and a diverse crop rotation in their farming operations. They will be looking for others who follow these practices.

Hedrick works with Foothills Distillery that produces Seventeen Twelve Bourbon using his corn and other locally produced grains. It is now being marketed in more than 36 states.

The distillery will soon be introducing Bloody Butcher Bourbon, made with Bloody Butcher heritage open-pollinated corn that's also raised by Hedrick.

"It has been aged for 6 years and is expected to be priced at around \$120 for a bottle," says Hedrick.

Other farmers could seek out similar arrangements or even attempt to produce their own spirits for sale. However, the regulatory hoops and marketing challenges are extensive.

"It took a lot of hard work, travel time and phone calls to set up distribution," says Hedrick. "We want to leverage that experience on a larger basis. The concept is to collaborate with other farmers instead of redoing the process 20 or 30 times."

Hedrick and his farmer partners plan to locate 2 or more regional distilleries in the Midwest in addition to working with Foothills Distillery.

Loren Steinlage, West Union, Iowa, is one of the farmers involved with Hedrick.

"We are looking at several possibilities for a distillery in northeast Iowa, including the former dairy barn on our farm," says Steinlage.

The goal is to produce a national brand using grain from participating farmers for



Foothills Distillery is making bourbon from open-pollinated corn and has plans for other specialty batches.

batches of spirits labeled with the farm they came from.

"We will have the name of the farm and the state where the grain was grown and a code on the bottle's label," says Hedrick. "If you buy a bottle, you will be able to use the code on our website to learn about the farm and the people who operate it."

A second option will be for the partners to work with state alcohol boards for distribution of spirits in the state where the grain originated.

"A third avenue will be for the farmer who originated the grain to apply for a state license to sell the product at their farm or local area or at field days on the farm," says Hedrick. "The thing that I have enjoyed about craft spirits is that there is a lot of alcohol out there, but special whiskeys and bourbons made with heirloom grains will make our product different from any other."

Hedrick hopes to have the business up and running by the end of the year.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Russell Hedrick, 4155-Section House Rd., Hickory, N.C. 28601 (ph 803 530-4315; jrhgainfarmsllc@gmail.com).

"Made It Myself" Metal Bender

When Bradley Bruhn needed a machine to bend sheet metal, he decided to make his own and power it with a windshield wiper motor. The simple design is one that could easily be scaled up. Bruhn says he worked off the top of his head with no real plans.

"I used angle iron on the ends bolted to steel plate on the one side and angle iron on the other for a 10 1/2 by 20 1/5-in. base," says Bruhn. "The rollers are 16 1/2-in. long, 2-in. pipe that are mounted to 1/4-in. flat iron welded to the angle iron ends."

To mount the rollers, Bruhn cut end caps out of 1/4-in. steel and center drilled 5/8-in. holes in them. He welded the end caps in the pipes to stabilize 5/8-in. rods that hold the rollers in place. The rods rest in holes drilled 3 in. apart in the iron plates at the ends of the bender frame, extending out of one end. At that end, Bruhn mounted 2 1/2-in. sprockets for #40 chain to the rods for the lower rollers. The wiper motor is mounted to the end of one rod. It is powered by a 12-volt motor with a switch for on/off and forward/reverse.

The third roller with its rod is mounted in steel collars that ride inside C-channel uprights. The uprights are welded in place to the end plates and angle iron. T-bolts threaded through a U-shaped bracket atop the uprights can raise the roller up to 3 in.

"I used set screws to attach the bracket to the C-channel uprights and to attach the drive sprockets to the lower rollers," says Bruhn.



Bruhn made his metal bender using a wiper motor and rollers welded to angle iron.

"If I want to remove the upper roller or the lower ones, all I need is an L-wrench."

One thing he used it for was to make a cone speaker for his brother's antique phonograph. "Bending a cone is a matter of cutting the metal in a curve at the top and the bottom," says Bruhn. "Then, when you bend it, the sides pull together."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bradley Bruhn, 157 Indiana St., Palermo, N. Dak. 58769 (ph 701 621-6529; mjosh8231@gmail.com).