Set-N-Seed makes it possible to plant uniformly, even with heavily used disk blades, gauge wheel arms, and rocker arms that could otherwise cause uneven performance.

Planter Tool Helps Improve Depth Control

Set-N-Seed is a planter seed depth calibration tool that makes it easy to accurately set your desired planting depth from 1 in. to 2 1/2 in. It comes with a main 1-in. block and multiple 1/2-in. stackable inserts.

The planter accessory is the invention of Blake Patton, a self-proclaimed tinkerer from Nashville. "I've been a precision planting dealer since 2015," Patton says. "I help retrofit planters with new technology and provide maintenance services. There are times when I help customers set the depth of the planter to make sure there is uniformity across it. If the planter units are all set in the same notches or number, it doesn't mean they're all at the same depth for each row unit. This could cause emergence issues, especially when planting into dry conditions."

Patton initially used two 4 by 4 blocks to set the depth on each row unit. While this system worked, the process was slow and tedious. Inspiration struck with the idea of the Set-N-Seed, a tool that doesn't just check the depth but actively sets it. "At that point, I made a few prototypes and realized I wasn't the only one with this issue," he explains. "So, I decided to patent it and make it available to farmers everywhere."

Using the Set-N-Seed makes it possible to plant uniformly, even with heavily used disk blades, gauge wheel arms, and rocker arms that could otherwise cause uneven performance. As Patton explains, "The farmer can quickly set the depth to what he believes is at or under the soil moisture line across the entire planter before heading to the field. After starting to plant, he'll still need to check to ensure the seed is planting at the correct depth based on that soil moisture line, but they don't need to dig up every row, knowing that the planter is equally calibrated."

Once in the deepest setting, the disc openers will rest on the metal production plate while the gauge wheels rise to the desired depth determined by Set-N-Seed block and additional side attachments. Almost all planter makes and models utilizing 1/4" notches can be set this way.

Patton began experimenting with a Set-N-Seed prototype in 2019 and received a patent in 2022. "I wanted as much of the Set-N-Seed to be local as possible," he explains. "Luckily, I live in an area with plenty of resources from wonderful people/companies." Every component, even the shipping boxes, is made within 30 miles of his house in Illinois. The only exception is the plastic mold injection sourced from Detroit.

This tool is well-suited for any farmer that utilizes a planter or seeder. With a little familiarity, it takes just 30 seconds to calibrate the Set-N-Seed for each row. Patton believes it should take just 15 mins. to calibrate a 16-row planter, which otherwise takes over an hour. "As long as the depth is set with a gauge wheel, the Set-N-Seed can give peace of mind to the farmer that the row units are true to the depth they set. Knowing the depth is calibrated is one box that can be checked before going to the field."

Set-N-Seed costs $185 for one 1-in. main block and multiple 1/2-in. stackable inserts.

Coming Fall of 2023, Patton will release two new adaptors that will allow for more precise depth. This will create the ability to set your planting depth from 1/4 in. to 2 3/4 in.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Set-N-Seed, 10000 Pleasant Hill Rd., Oakdale, Ill. 62268 (ph 618-538-1991; info@setnseed.com; www.setnseed.com).

How To Make Pelleted Feed On The Farm

Making your own pelleted feed on the farm is likely much easier than you think.

Pelleting turns finely ground material into dense little cylinders by applying pressure and heat. Pellets can be used for feed, fuel, and even animal bedding. However, most pellet mills will work best for one purpose or the other and shouldn't be swapped between them.

Not only can it be cost-effective to make feed pellets at home, but making your own feed allows you to choose from different ingredients to maximize animal health and safety. Serving feed as pellets also prevents livestock from picking out the parts they don't like, which can lead to less waste in the long run.

The primary factors that affect homemade pellets are the ingredients used, how finely you grind them, whether they are softened with steam to enhance binding properties, and how they are compressed into shape.

The logistics can vary based on personal goals. For example, the Martin family of Saskatchewan buys barley in bulk from a neighbor to grind with their Mix-Mill before adding whatever protein and mineral supplements they deem necessary at the time for the livestock they plan to feed. The resulting pellets are bucketed and used as a scoop-and-go ration for their pigs, chickens, cattle, and sheep, each of which is fed a different mix. Overall, the family makes 60 tons of homemade pellets per year.

If you plan to make your own animal feed, it's best to follow an established recipe. This ensures you provide the correct ratios of nutrients for healthy growth. You need some ingredients that add moisture and some that act like glue to bind everything together. The overall mixture will need an approximate moisture content of 15 percent to form pellets. A scale works best for weighing out each component. Next, grind each ingredient to less than 3/4-in. in size, usually with a feed hammer mill. Consider doing each ingredient separately to ensure a consistent texture and easier blending.

Once blended and measured, you can mix the formulation with a ribbon blender or paddle mixer. You can then move the prepared mixture to a pelleting press. At this point, you might need to use steam to add heat and moisture. This softens the feed and helps the ingredients within it stick together when pressed into pellets. Gently feed the conditioned meal into the press to create pellets.

Primary factors that affect homemade pellets are the ingredients used, how finely you grind them, whether they're softened with steam to enhance binding properties, and how they're compressed into shape.

Home setups allow ample time for pellets to cool naturally. The completed pellets are ready to be fed out to animals immediately or stored for future use. Storage requirements will vary based on ingredients.

One resource for homestead-scale pellet makers is PelletMasters. With over 300 machines ready to ship, the company has the largest in-stock selection of flat die pellet mills in North America. Its selection of mills for feed ship with a standard 6mm die but will accommodate sizes 3 mm to 8 mm and even 12 mm upon special request. Expect them to produce 20 lbs. per horsepower per hour running on electricity and 13 lbs. per hour powered on gasoline, diesel, or PTO. Prices range by model and size but start around $1,600. Replacement parts are available for most models by request.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, PelletMasters, 1406 Lowater Rd., Chippewa Falls, Wis. 54729 (ph 715-726-3100; info@pelletmasters.com; www.pelletmasters.com).

Key to the rake's design is a push plate that can be advanced forward, pushing silage or haylage off the tips of the tines.

Pitbull Rake Designed To Move Silage, Haylage

Tubeline Manufacturing has released the Pitbull Rake, a versatile tool for moving silage and haylage. By combining the traits of a dozer blade and a bucket, the rake makes it possible to both push and carry material. It can transport large amounts of material through bunker silos without creating disruption and is well-suited for pushing material up the bunk, filling low spots, or piling material around edges.

"It's used for moving silage and haylage through bunker silos," says Tim Wiebe, Tubeline representative. "Haylage can be hard to move with a blade. This rake makes it possible to lay the material down at the preferred thickness. The more it gets packed down, the less spoilage you have to deal with later."

The key to the rake's design is a push plate that can be advanced forward, pushing silage or haylage off the tips of the tines. This prevents it from potentially disrupting any material already in place. Push plate guides ensure smooth operation as the plate is extended and retracted. It's ideal for situations where an adjustable plate would be restricted. Two hydraulic cylinders are powered through a 50/50 flow divider to engage the push plate. Bale spears are also mounted within the frame to reduce scraping and make it easier to carry large loads. Likewise, AR450 tines on the bottom allow the rake to easily pick up and move material.

The rake's easy-to-use, flexible design provides high visibility to ensure that tractor drivers can always see where the tines are, improving accuracy when filling and shaping material. "The rake makes it easy to get a nice, even layer of silage at the bottom," says Wiebe. "Regular blades just lead to balling up."

This rake design, popular for decades in Europe, is ideal for both large and small farm operations. Says Wiebe, "Best of all, it's just a fraction of the price of blades. And a 14-ft. rake will do as much as a 16-ft. blade."

Tubeline offers two models: the RL series (100-200 hp.) and the R series (150-350 hp.). The back of both models includes bolt-on lugging for maximum compatibility with almost any loader. All Pitbull products come with a 2-year warranty to protect against defects. The company sells the Pitbull Rake through a network of distributors across Canada and the U.S.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tubeline Manufacturing, 6455 Reid Woods Dr. RR #4, Elmira, Ontario, Canada N3B 2Z3 (ph 888-856-6613; www.pitbullblades.com).