

Portable Bin Makes Feeding Pasture Chickens Easier

For Caleb Barron of Santa Cruz, Calif., feeding the chickens in his eight 20 by 40-ft. pasture mobile range coops (MRCs) was always a labor-intensive task.

Since he operates on short-term land leases, installing feed silos and pouring concrete aren't realistic options, so he regularly buys his chicken feed in 1-ton super sacks.

In the past, Barron brought the totes to the MRCs and used 5-gal. pails to scoop and transfer the feed.

"It worked but it was a pain," says Barron. "Getting all the feed out of the bottom of the tote takes so much time. We also tried filling 40 buckets and hauling them out on a flatbed truck but were lifting the same pails two or three times. It was ridiculously inefficient."

When friends in Northern California told him about their Jacky Bin and how much they liked it, Barron decided to purchase one.

"From day one, my employees and I loved it," he says. "It's made of food grade poly and comes with a slotted metal frame for carrying it on the forks of a loader or skid steer."

With the bin placed on the ground beside his loading dock, Barron carries a tote up the dock on his skid steer's forks and suspends it above the bin to transfer the feed.

As they use one sack per day, they load the bin in the morning and drive it to the MRCs where they fill two buckets at a time from a conveniently placed metal slide chute on the lower part of the bin.

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small extension we bought along with the bin, it holds an entire tote of feed."

He says the bin plus the additional extension and shipping cost him about \$3,500.

Bins can be purchased at www.jackybins.com or www.gcsbins.com.

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Fodder Box Produces Fresh Feed Daily

Carl Blake says using sprouted grain seedlings as fodder makes for healthier livestock and lower cost production. He has been making and feeding sprouts to livestock for around 15 years (Vol. 36, No. 5).

Now American Fodder Box (AFB) is bringing his expertise to the market. The company will soon be introducing three models capable of producing 150, 500, or 1,000 lbs. of fodder per day. Each layer of the Fodder Boxes is emptied, cleaned and refilled every seven days.

"We put prototypes out to livestock producers around the country to test out our design and protocols," says Lynn Griswald, American Fodder Box. "Based on their feedback, we made changes to our design. Now we are ready to go into production. We didn't want to get out there until we had them working right."

One of the changes made was to eliminate computerization and go with analog controls. Griswald notes that competitive fodder-making systems tend to be complicated.

"We wanted a system that was simple to work with," he says. "If there is a problem, a customer can call us up, and we can tell them what to do to get the system back online."

"Just put the seed in and shut the door," says Blake. "The light and water turn on automatically. The Dosatron built into the system automatically delivers any additives needed."

AFB systems have no visible plumbing. Water circulation is built into the structure, with the 1-in. sq. tubing delivering water and any additives. Polycarbonate material clads the exterior.

The American Grow Cube 150 is 4 by 4 by 7 1/2 ft. The 500 is 8 by 8 by 9 1/2 ft. and the 1,000 is 8 by 16 by 9 1/2 ft.

AFB uses steel trays to make cleaning easier. A sprinkler is attached directly to the racking. It includes a leak prevention device to prevent drips after the periodic watering. No pumps are needed as the design utilizes well water pressure. UVC lighting constantly purifies the air as it passes through the system, controlling mold spores.

Options include a backup water and pump system, should well pressure fail for a length of time. A recirculation system is also available, as is a trolley and special seeding system, a pH sensor and a pH balancing system. An optional seed cleaning and filtration system cleans seed and removes mycotoxins and other impurities that can affect germinating seed.

Blake recommends two products as key to the success of the AFB systems. One is



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Oxy Blast from Essential Water Solutions, a hydrogen peroxide water treatment (www.essentialwater.net). Combined with the grow cube's integrated UV light and air circulation, it helps control mold and mildew, common problems in fodder systems.

"We've also found the Oxy Blast chemically lacerates the seed, doubling germination rates," says Blake.

The second product is Fodder Flora, an AFB proprietary probiotic. It can be delivered through the Dosatron to help control mold and mildew. It can also be sprayed on the fodder as it is being removed from the tray.

"Fodder Flora helps increase Brix levels and the nutrition of the fodder," says Blake. AFB uses a local fabrication firm to build the Grow Cubes to order. Griswald advises expecting a 4-week turnaround from order to delivery. Prices going forward will depend on changing supply costs, but Griswald suggests the 150-lb. Grow Cube will be under \$5,000, with the 500-lb. unit being priced below \$30,000.

"Fodder converts seed into feed at a ratio of about 1:7," says Blake. "However, it's not just about the cost of feed. Fodder makes its vitamins and enzymes available immediately. Hog producers eliminate medications, and milk producers report better conception rates.

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Trailer-Mounted Power Ladder

Tom Chaney's 35-ft. power ladder goes where a bucket truck can't thanks to the trailer it's mounted on. With the ladder turntable mounted over the axle, the trailer can be unhooked from the towing vehicle and pushed into place by only two men. Once in place, the ladder is raised to the desired height so the user can climb up and into the man-bucket for safe work.

"The power ladder is completely self-contained," says Chaney. "I replaced a small winch with a 2,500-lb. electric winch to raise and lower the ladder and the bucket. It's powered by two deep cycle batteries."

The winch cable runs through a pulley about 8 ft. above the base and back to the bottom of the upper ladder. As the drum-style winch turns, the upper ladder rises.

"An electric motor, also powered by the batteries, rotates the ladder," adds Chaney. "I mounted a small gas engine on the ladder base to drive a 220-amp alternator that charges the batteries."

Chaney first built the trailer and then added the ladder with its 5-ft. dia., 360-degree rotating base. He had given a friend \$125 for the ladder unit, which had been sitting unused. It was previously mounted to an electric company van. Comparable new power ladders sell for \$25,000.

His outlay for the trailer was even less. "I paid \$100 for the 10,000-lb. axle with spring shackles," says Chaney. "The trailer frame is made from pallet racking I'd salvaged. A friend had the plate steel lying around and gave it to me for the trailer deck. I whipped it out over a weekend."

Chaney bolted the ladder base to the trailer at eight anchor points. Although it was extremely stable as is, he added outriggers to the trailer. He also built a control box for ladder extension and rotation and added it to the bucket.

"It's not as safe as a bucket truck, but it's better than any ladder," notes Chaney. "I can set it up close to my barn or another building and still have room to maneuver in



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the bucket."

He appreciates the materials he got from friends that kept costs to a minimum. He notes that there is a lot of sharing back and forth. "Everybody helps each other out," says Chaney. "Plus, they all know where the power ladder is if they need to use it."

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Walkway Mounted On Deere 4040

"My brother had to use a ladder to put gas in his Deere 4040. Another problem was that the step up into the cab was too high off the ground. I fixed both problems," says Ralph Volkman, Black Creek, Wis.

The walkway he built along the side of the tractor is 51 in. long, made from 1/4-in. thick 3 1/2 by 5-in. angle iron and Grip Strut safety tread plank. It bolts solidly to the frame of the tractor and makes it easy for him to work on the tractor.

He lowered the step up to the cab using a 6-in. piece of 2 by 3-in. rectangular tubing, which drops it lower to the ground and 12 in. of 3-in. channel iron to hold the expanded metal step.

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Tractor walkway made from angle iron and safety tread plank.