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Rock Picker Designed For The Big Ones

No excavator is needed to pull big rocks out of the field if you have a Hydrabox from AgStorm. Mounted to the front of a big tractor, it's designed to grab and carry up to 4,000-lb. rocks, all controlled by an in-cab remote.

"The Hydrabox is like having an excavator on the front of your tractor," says Erik Karlson, AgStorm. "It'll go on any tractor large enough to handle its weight. We have it on tractors from North Dakota to Michigan."

The Hydrabox is the big brother of AgStorm's earlier rock picker, the Rock Box for ATV's and UTV's. It's designed to replace skid steers and backhoes on mid-size and larger rocks. It uses a cable winch system and four claws to hook a rock and lift it.

The Hydrabox rock picker uses two sets of opposing, grade 80, steel claws with a tensile strength of 80,000 lbs. The 3-in. hydraulic cylinder controls the claws with 31,000 lbs. of pressure. The claws extend into the ground to 3 ft. beneath the surface to wrap around a rock.

Brackets are available to match tractors and include any hardware needed. Brackets

bolt to the frame of the tractor. However, if the tractor has an existing weight bracket, AgStorm makes a matching bracket that slides into place.

"Standard weight brackets with suitcase weights and hardware can run \$14,000," notes Karlson. "The Hydrabox starts at \$13,900 and gives you at least 1,900 lbs. of front-end weight."

The Hydrabox is available in 5 and 6-ft. models with respective weights of 1,900 and 2,100 lbs. The 5-ft. wide model (\$13,999) has a 30-in. deep, 18-in. high rock box. The 6-ft. wide Hydrabox (\$14,999) has a 48-in. deep by 18-in. high box. Add the weight of prospective rocks, and it's easy to see why Karlson says the size and weight of the tractor are key. He references 8000 series Deere and Case IH Magnum series as appropriate sized examples.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, AgStorm Equipment, 41062 Fort Rd., St. Peter, Minn. 56082 (ph 507-995-2321; agstorm.sales@gmail.com; www.agstormequipment.com).



FieldSeal toolboxes are made with 3/16-in. powder-coated steel with a rubber seal like those used in cab and truck doors. The seal makes them fully dust and weatherproof.

Built-In Toolboxes For Big Tractors, Combines

FieldSeal toolboxes from AgStorm are designed for large tractors and combines with room for most tools needed in field repair.

"There aren't many toolboxes properly sized for combines and tractors," says Erik Karlson, AgStorm. "These were an outgrowth of our CEO Ben Wenner's farming experience."

The tractor model (\$1,699) is 36 in. wide at the top and 20 in. at the bottom. It's 10 in. deep and 34 in. tall and weighs in at 190 lbs. without tools.

The combine model (\$1,899) is slightly bigger with its 36-in. wide top and bottom. Depth and height are the same as the tractor model.

"Both systems have magnetic trays for nuts and bolts, but other elements differ slightly," says Karlson. "The combine model is a little different with its drop-down worktable."

The combine model also holds both 3/8-in. and 1/2-in. sockets, while the tractor has only 1/2-in. sockets. The entire combine unit swings out and away for access to the rotor behind it. The tractor model mounts directly to the frame for easy hood access. Both hold metric and standard sockets and wrenches, as well as a variety of other tools and maintenance supplies.



Toolboxes hold metric and standard sockets as well as other tools and parts.

Both systems are made with 3/16-in. powder-coated steel with a bulb rubber seal like used in cab and truck doors. The seal makes them fully dust and weatherproof.

Brackets are available for 8000 Series Deere and larger, as well as Case IH Magnum series, Challenger 700s and above, and the new Fendts. Custom mounting brackets for other tractors can be ordered for an additional \$549.

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Electronic Scarecrow Keeps Sweet Corn Safe

Ken Elliot reduced avian damage to his sweet corn from 80 percent to less than 5 percent with his electronic scarecrow. The inventive market gardener (Vol. 45, No. 2) combined vocal alarm calls with a laser to rid his fields of grackles and other problem birds.

"I've been using laser pest deterrents on my farm since 2017," says Elliot. "Initially, bird damage dropped to less than 1 percent. However, every bird on my farm has grown up on it, and the efficacy has changed marginally."

Even 5 percent damage is acceptable to Elliot, who suffered an estimated 80 percent loss of his sweet corn crop in 2016. That equated to \$18,000 in lost sales. In 2017 he joined a research project with Dr. Rebecca Brown, University of Rhode Island. Brown was looking at laser scarecrow feasibility. It also led to a SARE research grant and the development of DIY scarecrow laser plans.

Since then, Elliot and a partner have been refining and further developing the pest bird repellent system. "Our system is a combination of laser and auditory stimuli that keeps birds uncomfortable and nervous," says Elliot. "I think it's the combination of hearing the distress call and seeing the laser at the same time that tricks them into thinking the laser is a predator."

Elliot suggests that how the mobile system is set up in the field also plays a role. He saturates a block of sweet corn (as much as 2 acres) as it nears maturity and picking, but



"Our system is a combination of laser and auditory stimuli that keeps birds uncomfortable and nervous," says Elliot.

only for that short period.

"Ideally, I get a unit out to the field as the silk in a block of sweet corn starts drying down," says Elliot. "When the next block starts drying, I put a system in it. From that point on, I leapfrog systems as blocks are picked out and other blocks near picking."

Elliot has tried the distress call tape alone and found it to be effective for 5 to 7

days. With the laser, there was no drop in effectiveness.

"I think the number of years we've used a laser system has disrupted bird behavior," says Elliot. "I suspect pecking sweet corn is a learned behavior. They have gone from super organized and highly efficient at destroying corn to having no idea what to do. We still have a lot of birds, but they do almost no damage."

Elliot and his partner have sold prototype units as they were developed to other market gardeners in a 300-mile area. Feedback has matched Elliot's success.

"We installed units and trained operators how to use them," says Elliot. "If there were problems, we serviced them or sent replacement parts."

Based on what they have learned on the Elliot Farm and that of their cooperators, the partners are taking their system to the next level. The new one is Green Scarecrow 4.0. It includes the laser, the audio system with two speakers, and the solar panel to power them.

"We're moving from bootstrapping development and reinvesting everything in the system to commercial marketing of the system," says Elliot. "We'll move into a fabrication and warehousing facility and begin producing units for sale this coming year."

Elliot expects most training of operators will be over the phone. The system is a modular design. If a problem develops, it'll be easy for the operator to swap out a module.

"We expect our system will cost a third of a comparable laser system now on the market," says Elliot.

He concedes their current system is quite sweet corn specific. The partners don't plan to stop there. They're already working on a system for protecting blueberries and other fruit from songbirds.

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