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Front Mounted Swath Roller Handles Multiple Tasks

“Combines have become larger and as a result, swaths have gotten bigger,” says James Hudson, owner of JF Hudson Co., U.K. “Although tractors have also grown in size, the space underneath hasn’t increased at the same rate. We’ve seen some very large crops of rye, along with heavy grass and straw swaths that were a challenge to bale.”

To address the problem, Hudson modified their existing front-mounted storage box to also be used as a swath roller and twine wrap carrier. During baling season, a choice of a 5 or 6-ft. roller is bolted on, twine and wrap carriers are attached and the unit is mounted using the tractor’s 3-pt. front linkage.

“This gives the range of height required to use it as an effective swath roller,” Hudson says. “It’s turned freely by the crop as there’s a bearing at each end of the roller.”

The attachment carries up to eight balls of

twine or a twine rack can be added without the roller to hold eight rolls of wrap or six of twine.

Hudson explains a range of box sizes and other add-ons such as a water tank, fire extinguisher or leaf blowers can be purchased. The units are interchangeable for year-round use.

All JF Hudson manufacturing is done in their North Yorkshire workshop.

The equipment is not yet available in North America, but Hudson says they’re actively looking for interested distributors. The cost of the units in the U.K. is around £3000 plus taxes and delivery.

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Jesse Madaffari’s custom-made “Greenie Jr.” Rat Rod has the cab and hood from older Deere tractors.

Rat Rod Deere Is Builder’s “Daily Driver”

“As long as it’s 60 degrees or more, my custom-built Deere Rat Rod is my ‘daily driver,’” says Texas inventor Jesse Madaffari. “I had the idea for this floating in my head for 7 or 8 years and finally put it together, using a 1982 GMC S15 truck frame, a 496 big block engine, a cab from a 1975 Deere 7520 tractor, and the hood from a Deere 4450. It’s a real head-turner and a lot of fun to drive.”

Tricked out with several engine modifications, Madaffari says his “Square Body” vehicle probably has more than 700 hp. and is capable of sub-10 second runs in a quarter mile. He says even though it’s quick on the track, it performs just fine on conventional roadways.

His custom-built rig is a staple at car shows and drew a lot of attention at the February 2022 Sick Week event in Florida. Madaffari was among 350 participants who competed over 5 days of drag and drive competition at five different drag strips. Madaffari’s average time during the five runs was 12.56 seconds

and 95.88 mph.

To qualify for the competition, owners must not only race but drive their vehicles between tracks on a pre-set route. During the event, participants admire vehicles, socialize, share stories, and Madaffari says, “just plain have fun.”

The cab for Madaffari’s vehicle is similar to the one on a 7520 Deere tractor that he used to drive while working fields in his native Texas. He salvaged it from a farmer he knew who’d taken it off the tractor and set it near a fence line where it was surrounded by sunflowers with a tree growing through the roof. During the same trip to recover the cab, he found the hood from a burned-out 4450 Deere tractor. He says those two items really set his rig apart, along with the custom engine, transmission, paintwork, and graphics by his wife Mimi, who he says is “in charge of the pretty”. He says all those characteristics are key for Rat Rod builders.

Asphalt Roller Converted To Skid Steer Drive

Ray Kuhn converted the rear roller of a motorized asphalt roller into a handy attachment for his skid steer. He can roll asphalt, shale or pack dirt, and it doesn’t require a separate motor.

“The fewer things we have to change the oil on and keep tuned up, the better,” says Kuhn.

As it is, he has no shortage of equipment needing oil changes and tuning. Kuhn has a full line of excavation equipment and multiple tri-axle dump trucks. When he saw the worn-out asphalt roller sitting in a scrap yard, he knew what he wasn’t going to do, and that was get it back in operation.

“The motor had broken down,” he recalls. “It was an ancient thing, not worth fixing.”

What did have some value was the rear roller. Kuhn cut the back section off with a torch.

“It had a nice flat surface where I could add the mounts for the skid steer quick attach,” says Kuhn.

All he added was a couple of pieces of square tubing for reinforcement. He also cut the top off what had been a big water tank on top of the roller. He filled it with gravel for a little extra weight.

“I’ve been impressed with how well it works for dirt, shale and leftover asphalt.”



Rear roller from asphalt roller converted to skid steer quick attach.

says Kuhn.

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Refurbished sawmill mounted to a bale carrier frame is 25 ft. long.

Old Sawmill Goes Mobile

When Travis Carpenter picked up a homemade sawmill, he turned it over to the ranch manager and resident sawmill expert, Mark Oconnell. Oconnell is a former Vo-Ag instructor, who at one time purchased his own small Hudson sawmill. With it, he could provide students with lumber they couldn’t afford to buy.

“Mark is a phenomenal craftsman and keeps our place running with little downtime or incidents,” says Carpenter. “All I did was purchase the sawmill. It was his project and retrofit.”

Oconnell started with the sawmill. It had about 18 ft. of homemade track. The mill didn’t run, so his first task was to go through everything.

“I put a new carburetor on it, new bearings and new carrier bearings for the wheels to run on the tracks,” says Oconnell. “I also put an electric winch on it to raise and lower the blade.”

Carpenter had picked up a self-loading bale carrier at auction a few years earlier. When the sawmill arrived, Oconnell could see the two were made for each other.

“The carrier frame was perfect for the track,” he says.

Most of the work he did on the carrier was stripping away the extras, like the loading arm, pivot point, gears and chains, plus all the hydraulics.

“I thought I might be able to use the arm to pick up logs, but it was too far forward,” says Oconnell.

When the bale carrier had been stripped down to the frame, Oconnell set the tracks for the sawmill carriage in place. Although

they were a hair wider than the bale carrier frame, the track cross members sat on the 2 by 6-in. carrier rails just fine. Where needed, he notched the carrier frame, so the track sat flat. When he put the sawmill carriage on the track, he leveled the track so he wouldn’t have to shim logs when milling.

“It was a perfect fit to marry the two together,” says Oconnell. “The bale carrier frame is solid. I’ve been around a lot of portable sawmills, and this is as stable as it can get. There’s virtually no setup when I pull it into the field to mill logs. I put down the tongue jack, unhook it from the tractor and go to work.”

Oconnell hung an old tank on the carriage for water to lubricate the blade. “It seemed to fit,” he says. “It has a nice brass valve to control water flow and a line to the saw blade.”

He also added about 7 ft. to the track, bringing it to about 25 ft. total. The length is also about right for his needs.

“I can mill out a 23-ft. footboard and then cut it up to hang between posts 10 ft. apart,” says Oconnell.

The actual throat is only 32 in., but there is 50 in. between the carriage uprights. He is confident he could mill a log 4 ft. in diameter, flipping it over and raising and lowering the saw blade as he cut it down to a 4-sided cant.

“I think I can mill just about any logs we might have here in Montana,” says Oconnell.

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