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Legacy Deere Teeter-Totter

By Cindy Ladage

One of John Deere's biggest supporters over the years was the late Brian Holst. He was a farmer in Scott County, Iowa, and worked at John Deere for over 35 years in various roles. He's fondly remembered by Deere fans for his work at the now-closed John Deere Collectors Center.

After retiring from John Deere, he went on to work at Aumann Auctions. His love of tractors and the people who love tractors made talking with Brian a real pleasure. He passed away in June 2025, leaving behind a wife, Shelly, five children and six grandchildren.

He also left another legacy, displayed at the 2026 Gathering of the Green — a John Deere Teeter-Totter tractor he was building for his grandchildren. At the Gathering, they shared the story of this large John Deere creation. Once he was diagnosed with a

terminal illness, friends and family helped complete the big tractor toy. Kevin Bos was key in finishing the teeter-totter and had it on display at the Bos Farm Show.

The teeter-totter was so large that it was deemed too big for a yard. Brian and Shelly then donated it to Classic Green for a youth fundraiser. Since then, it's made several appearances, and the current owner donated it back to be auctioned off at the Gathering so it can find a new home and make a difference elsewhere. The funds from the big toy will go to the "Brian Holst Memorial Fund."

At the Gathering, the sign by the Teeter-Totter tractor read, "Brian was passionate about getting youth involved in tractor restoration, collecting and farming. This teeter-totter helps to fund his legacy and reach the youth that this hobby desperately needs in order to continue growing and thriving."



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Farmer Experiment Offers Winter Wheat Solution

Jim Halford, a longtime advocate for conservation and no-till farming, has been instrumental in developing practical solutions for winter wheat growers across the Canadian Prairies. Winter wheat is typically best sown after crops such as canola, but the shift toward longer-maturing canola varieties and straight-cutting has complicated timely planting. The bottleneck is that farmers often can't seed winter wheat because they're still harvesting canola.

Halford's ingenuity led him to retrofit his swather with a spray boom and a cart for water and herbicide, enabling him to apply pre-seed herbicide during canola swathing. This hands-on innovation eliminated the need for a separate pre-seed herbicide operation for winter wheat. By spraying at the same time as swathing, Halford believed farmers could control weeds and conserve soil moisture at this crucial time of year, when harvest and field work demands intersect.

What Halford accomplished wasn't merely a smart labor-saving tactic; it streamlined timing hurdles, one of the biggest hurdles for Prairie farmers. Spraying pre-seed herbicide during canola swathing made it easier for growers to transition to winter wheat without sacrificing efficiency.

After a local field day in Indian Head, Saskatchewan, Halford convinced Brian Beres, a research scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, to make a side trip to Halford's farm to view Halford's recent swather retrofit experiment.

"From what Jim showed me, I thought he had a really good idea," Beres says. "My first goal was to build some science around it."

Beres took on the task and led a scientific study to expand the idea.

With funding in place for a winter wheat and canola sequencing study, Beres and his team adapted the technique for small-scale trials, mounting a sprayer tank directly onto a 12-ft. Versatile swather. The experiments compared swathing versus straight-cutting, simultaneous swathing and spraying, and standard pre-seed herbicide applications ahead of winter wheat planting.

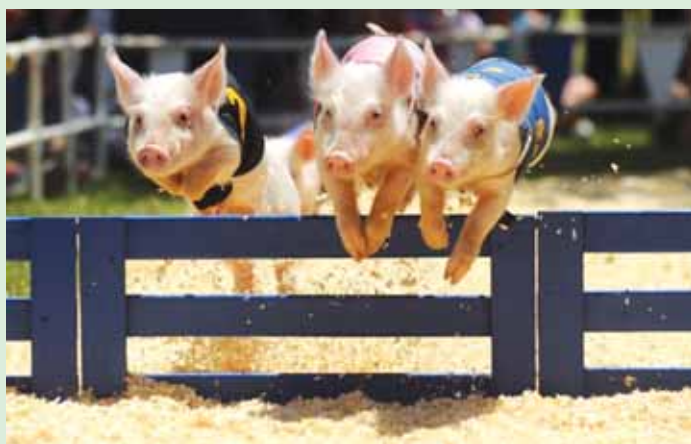
"The results were every bit as good in our study as Jim got on his farm," Beres says. "It was a cool experiment showing that the simultaneous swathing and spraying of application plots delivered slightly higher yields."

Conducted across Lethbridge, Indian Head, Lacombe and Brandon from 2019 to 2024, the trials generated compelling data spanning 16 site-years. The research, later published in the *European Journal of Agronomy*, demonstrated strong weed control while helping to eliminate the need for separate fall herbicide applications.

Despite these advances, the trend in Western Canada has favored straight-cutting canola, especially in brown-soil zones, where crop heights and yields are lower.

"The trials showed that if you're a serious winter wheat grower who straight cuts, you'll pay a yield penalty in your winter wheat rotation," Beres says. "We had superior yields in swathed vs. straight-cutting. Sometimes farmers adopt things like this, but operations that swath and are committed winter wheat growers should look seriously at what both Jim's and our studies accomplished."

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With the track announcer urging the audience to cheer and applaud, the pigs race around the track, leap over small hurdles, and charge toward the treat line.

Audiences Go Hog Wild For Pig Racing

When it comes to generating audience excitement at county fairs and summertime events, nobody does it better than Bart Noll and his All-Alaskan Racing Pigs.

Noll's performance porkers wear colorful numbered bibs as they race from aluminum starting gates around their custom-made track to a small trough of piggy treats at the finish line. A track announcer introduces each contestant before the race to build excitement.

"It's a 'pig' deal to watch them kick up woodchips, jump over small hurdles, and go 'whole hog' in every heat," Noll says.

In 1987, Noll came up with the idea for pig racing while working as the event coordinator for the Tanana Valley State Fair in Fairbanks, Alaska. He'd seen pictures of racing pigs and decided to organize an event for the fair. It turned out so well that he later brought the idea with him to graduate school in Washington state.

"When I started, we used a lot of 2 by 2s, chicken wire and livestock pens on the lawn," Noll says. "Training the pigs is fairly easy because I've never seen a small pig that

doesn't like cookies. The event was such a hit that I refined the performance details and took it on the road. Now the program is even better, with special starting pens, clever track signage, an exciting track announcer, and a photo booth for the race winners."

Noll and his wife, Deanne, ran the show initially, and over the years, his five kids have all helped. They've been ticket takers, merchandise sellers, flag-wavers and piggy caretakers. Upon graduating from high school, each of them ran their own team, responsible for all show details, gaining a good sense of business.

Like professional athletes, Noll's performance pigs are all trained in racing tactics. He starts with litters of 6 to 8-week-old Gloucesterhire Old Spots (GOS) pigs, bringing them to his rural Washington farm for socialization and training. Noll says GOS pigs are very smart and quickly pick up racing techniques, sometimes in just one day.

"Even though they love to race, they're naturally calm, curious and have cute spotted markings. They have big ears and are a great example of heritage breeding."

Each spring, he buys a group of weaned pigs and runs them through basic training and socialization. When the show season starts, they board his climate-controlled "Piggie Penthouse" trailer and hit the road. Within two months, the little weanlings have grown to nearly 75 lbs., which is too big for the show. They're sold to farmers who raise them to market weight, and then he brings in younger, smaller pig performers.

"Over the years, we've had shows in all West Coast states along with Idaho, Nevada and Arizona," Noll says. "Our biggest crowd was during the halftime of a Seattle Seahawks NFL game."

Regardless of where they race, pigs in each pen have clever names, including Soapy Smith, Sourdough Jack, Kobuk, Yukon and Strawberry. Strawberry is typically the crowd favorite and poses in a photo booth with showgoers after each race.

The Nolls performed the show as a family until the oldest sons started school. Bart and Deanne had other careers, and Bart shared performing with other professional announcers. Eventually, the Noll sons joined the business. In 2012, Bart devoted full-time to

running and expanding the business, hiring announcers and providing management from headquarters, with occasional support on the road. 2026 marks the 40th season of the show.

"We're in the business of spreading happiness, and who doesn't need that nowadays?" Noll says.

Recently, he expanded the show format by adding pedal tractor pulls for kids. These take place on a two-lane pulling strip in the center of the race track. Custom pedal tractors are hooked to mini-pulling sleds, just like full-size pulling tractors.

"It's a great addition to our program, and kids ages 4 to 12 participate," Noll says.

The pig races, however, remain the main event. With the track announcer urging the audience to cheer and applaud, the pigs race around the track, leap over small hurdles, and charge toward the treat line.

"The pigs always put on a great show, and the audience loves it," Noll says.

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