



Early Lightning Weeders were limited to a 24-ft applicator bar, but advances now allow up to 44 ft of coverage from a single generator.

Lightning Weeder Still Going Strong

By Bruce Derksen, Contributing Editor

Kevin Olson began developing the Lasco Lightning Weeder around 1980, creating a functional electric weeding foundation that continues to shape the product today.

The Lightning Weeder used an electric bar to contact and kill any weeds that extended above a crop's canopy. Electricity traveled down the plant's stem, rupturing cells and membranes through the roots. The original designs were featured in FARM SHOW (Vol. 1, No. 2, and Vol. 5, No. 2).

Over the years, Olson's commitment led him to overhaul the electronics, replacing traditional controls with a modern touchscreen interface in the tractor cab. This enables farmers to precisely adjust current and voltage settings, tailoring weed control to both field conditions and tractor capabilities.

"We can adjust the current to match the tractor's horsepower," Olson explains. "We can also adjust voltage, letting farmers operate in heavy dew or light rain, as moisture

improves the conductivity, so weeds will kill more easily. It also works extremely well in weeds like Johnson grass, pigeon grass and kochia, where there's not a lot of contact with the main stem."

The aluminum mainframe and copper tubing bars are fully electrified for effective weed control, delivering over 20,000 volts. For safety, a tether switch is connected to the operator and immediately shuts down the machine if they leave the tractor seat. Additionally, a built-in speed monitor requires the equipment to move at least 1/2 mph before electricity is applied, reducing the risk of accidental contact. A strobe light indicates when the applicator bar is live, and rear coulter sensors ensure proper grounding to protect tires.

The generator, transformer and control circuits are powered by the tractor's PTO and mounted on the rear 3-pt. hitch. Olson has addressed compatibility issues with newer, higher tractors by raising the machine and designing coulters that pivot up to 22 degrees, preventing damage and improving tracking along curved rows. The boom can be manually raised or lowered during operation, and a patented bracket allows lift and tilt on hillsides and in drainage areas.

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"When you reach the row end, simply lift the bar, make the turn, and lower it down," Olson says. "The coulters also have sensors to confirm they're engaged in the ground and moving forward before the applicator bar becomes electrified again. It's 100% safe for the operator, but we always stress they need to be responsible and aware of nearby people and animals."

The Lasco Lightning Weeder offers power units for small and large tractors, with applicator bars sized accordingly. The 11-ft mainframe fits roadways, and its wings fold manually to prevent electrical interference with hydraulic systems.

"What sets the Lightning Weeder apart from our competition is that we can operate day and night, while they're limited to daylight with no dew," Olson says. "We can adjust the voltage to suit the conditions. Also, we adapt the unit to the tractor's horsepower; our applicator bars don't require a 3-pt. hitch on the front, and our coulters are in the rear, so they're not dragging through the canopy or cutting up the rows."

Prices range from \$55,000 to \$92,000, with dealer-direct sales and hands-on setup by Olson.

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Peeters collection of Fordson Super Major tractors includes two hitched in tandem.



Tractors are joined by a pivot frame resembling a lazy Susan on the rear of the front tractor.

Twin Super Major Tractors Turn Heads

By Lorn Manthey, Contributing Editor

Pat Peeters isn't afraid to say, "I've got a bad affliction for Fordson Super Major tractors. My parents owned them, and so did my grandparents and all my uncles. I really grew up with them, and now I have 15, probably one of the premier collections in the U.S. My cousins have the 'bug' almost as bad as I do."

In his stable of rare and hard-to-find Super Majors, two are hitched in tandem, creating a real head-turning pairing at tractor shows.

"The original coupling of two Fordsons was done in the 1950s by a farmer in Essex, England," Peeters says. "Then Essex Fordson dealers Ernest Doe & Sons built an improved model in 1958. It was originally called Doe Dual Drive, then abbreviated to Doe Triple-D. Four of them made it to the U.S. and were sold as the Doe Triple T."

The first Triple-D produced about 100 hp, and later couplings produced 130 and 150 hp.

Peeters reports that he tried to buy one of the two remaining Triple-Ts sold by Ralph Christenson of South Dakota from collector Don Hagstrom in Colorado.

"The price was quite high for just a hobby and show tractor," Peeters says. "So I let it go to a buyer from England."

Later, he learned that Hagstrom owned what was left of a tandem Christenson had built before he became the Doe dealer, and that Hagstrom was willing to sell it. All that remained was the coupling frame Christenson had made.

"That was a great opportunity," Peeters says, "because I already had two Super Majors that would work perfectly to put a twin-tractor like Ralph's back together."

Peeters used Ralph's frame to couple his Super Majors and build his own Triple D.

"After the first assembly, we removed and rebuilt the engine on the front tractor, made new steering cylinders, then installed an orbital steering assembly," Peeters says. "We made clutch and brake assemblies, then tore it back apart for other updates and restoration, including new tires and paint."

The tractors are joined by a pivot frame resembling a lazy Susan on the rear of the front tractor. Peeters drives the twin using clutch, throttle and brake controls from the back tractor operator station.

"It has a very sharp turning radius," he

says. "We pull a Kverneland 5-16 bottom plow with it. It's always a crowd favorite at tractor shows."

Although Peeters doesn't farm, he's been a fan of Super Major tractors for more than 35 years.

"When my dad passed away, I acquired his 58 model. I also have the 58 model my grandpa owned. They're identical tractors, right down to the serial numbers, both built in 1958. One ends in 28, and the other ends in 82."

His Super Major stable also includes a County Super 4, a County Super 6, and a Selene 4-WD with a GMC military axle and transfer case. One of his Majors worked on the Alaska Pipeline in the 1960s. He has a County row-crop model, one of only 100 built. He acquired an E27 Major with a Perkins engine from Canada because those models were never sold in the U.S. Some in his collection are restored, while others have their original patina.

"As a kid, I used to work with Majors around the farm and always enjoyed them," Peeters says. "Now I have a large collection and can put them to work out the back door, plowing or doing other farm work for friends."

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Peeters used a custom frame built by Ralph Christensen to couple his Super Majors.