

System allows Keiper to drive his Jazzy electric wheelchair up a rear ramp, onto the trailer, and then onto the front lift. The lift raises him to the height needed to enter whichever machine he plans to operate.



Custom Mobility System Helps Contractor Keep Working

For many equipment operators, mobility challenges can signal the end of time spent in the field. For Darwin Keiper, however, they became the inspiration for an innovative solution that enabled him to continue operating heavy equipment and to maintain his independence.

When Keiper was about 70 years old, he began struggling to climb into the excavators he used for his excavating contractor business. Determined to keep working, he designed and built a customized access system using a 10-ton tag-along trailer. The setup centers on an electric tailgate lift mounted at the front of the trailer, powered by a reservoir and a hydraulic piston.

The system allows Keiper to drive his Jazzy electric wheelchair up a rear ramp, onto the trailer, and then onto the front lift. The lift raises him to the height needed to enter whichever machine he plans to operate. Fold-out ramps bridge the gap between the trailer and the equipment, enabling him to move into position and transfer safely into the cab.

"I designed and built it myself because, at

my age and in my condition, I really needed it," Keiper says.

Now 79 and unable to walk, Keiper still uses the system by positioning the trailer alongside the machine he plans to run. Once the day's job is complete, he simply reverses the process and returns to his van.

Resourcefulness played a major role in the project's development. The rear ramp was repurposed from a snowmobile trailer, and the ramp surface was sourced from a shaker screen.

"I did buy the winch that lifts the trailer, but otherwise I had everything else I needed, so it didn't cost me anything," Keiper says. "Because of this system, I'm not dependent on anyone. If I want to work early or late, I can."

Keiper's invention is a testament to how creativity and determination can overcome physical limitations and extend a lifetime of productivity.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Darwin Keiper, Pocono Lake, Penn. 18347 (ph 570-646-2614; dkeiper@epix.net).

Silage Packer Leaves A Big Impression

Agromatic's Big Foot Silage Packer is designed to improve forage compaction in silage piles and bunkers, helping producers make higher-quality feed, increase storage capacity, and reduce fuel use.

"The machine's best feature is that it's fairly simple," says Agromatic Sales Manager Erik Niemeier. "It's designed to maximize pounds per square inch between the rollers and the silage, whether packing corn silage or haylage."

When fully loaded, the Big Foot delivers more than 50 psi per roller, resulting in tighter, more uniform packing. The steel wheels are filled with concrete and wrapped in stainless-steel bands to help prevent feed from sticking as they roll over a silage pile.

"Chop length doesn't matter. The multiple steel rollers concentrate weight into firm contact points, driving air out quickly," Niemeier says.

The result is faster packing, improved compaction efficiency, better preservation, and more consistent silage quality.

Practical features also make the machine easy to own and maintain. A mounted grease system keeps bearings lubricated, with an optional electronic lubrication method available. Built-in stands fold in for transport, allowing operators to move from one silage pit or farm to another without extra setup.

The Big Foot runs on a 3-pt. hitch and uses



Steel wheels are filled with concrete and wrapped in stainless-steel bands to help prevent feed from sticking as they roll over a silage pile.

a single-shaft design with split bearings for easier replacement.

"It's designed to carry concrete blocks for added weight, which are recommended to achieve the pressure needed for optimal packing," Niemeier says.

With blocks installed, the 9-wheel model weighs just under 12,000 lbs.

Agromatic offers several packer sizes, with the 9-wheel model the most common. Other options include 7, 6, and 5-wheel units, depending on tractor tire width and horsepower.

Manufactured in Wisconsin, the Big Foot Silage Packer is available through dealers in the U.S. and Canada. Pricing ranges from \$17,000 to \$25,000.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Agromatic, W6986 County Hwy. OO, Fond du Lac, Wis. 54937 (ph 800-800-5824; info@agromatic.net; www.agromatic.net).



Floating shed has buoyant foam between the floor joists and 55-gal barrels strapped to the shed's exterior corners.

Garden Shed Floats In High Water

After watching their garden shed float around the yard during high water, Brendon and Naomi Yoder looked for a solution. The idea of a worse flood carrying away their riding lawn mower, freezer and various tools was unacceptable.

They turned to their parents for advice. Naomi's dad, Mark Foley, suggested a boathouse-style floating shed. Brendon's dad, William, helped design and build it (Vol. 47, No. 3). This past winter, the concept proved its worth.

"We had 36 in. of water in our backyard," says Brendon. "That's the highest we've had so far, but it could handle 72 in. if necessary."

The floating shed has buoyant foam between the floor joists. In addition, 55-gal barrels were strapped to the shed's exterior corners. Metal posts were set about 4 ft deep and backfilled with concrete at each exterior corner.

"We calculated the foam alone would support 4,000 lbs.," recalls Brendon.

Chains were attached to the shed and the posts to float the shed in place and allow it to settle back down as the water receded. The length and the points where they're attached to the posts keep the chains taut when the shed is on the ground.

"We'd evacuated, so we didn't actually see it float off the ground, but we did see it settle back down," says Brendon. "Everything was in its place, and the chains were taut again."

The success has the Yoders and their in-laws considering their next flood-proofing project.

"We're talking about building a floating chicken coop," says Brendon.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Brendon Yoder, 537 E. 3rd St., Sumas, Wash. 98295 (brendon.yoder@gmail.com).



Hydraulic cylinder system changes disc pitch from the cab, allowing operators to match soil conditions without stopping.

Adjustable Disc System Targets Irrigation Ruts

The Pivot Track Closer from Besler Industries Inc. offers growers a one-pass method to reclaim irrigation pivot tracks while leaving fields packed, level and ready for the next operation.

The 3-pt. hitch-equipped closer features a heavy-duty 5-in. by 7-in. rectangular-tube frame. The machine uses a series of notched discs to cut and break down track sidewalls. A hydraulic cylinder system allows disc pitch to be adjusted from the cab, enabling operators to match soil conditions without stopping.

"When you don't need to throw a lot of dirt, you can set the pitch for minimal movement, and if you need more dirt moved, you can set it to be more aggressive," says Sales Manager Cliff Kester. "Operators control the pitch angle right from the cab."

The minimum pitch angle is 7 degrees, and the most aggressive is 27 degrees. Each wing or V pivots to match the desired angle.

A trailing, hydraulically controlled double-basket assembly breaks up clods and firms the surface, leaving the field level or slightly humped. Optional weight brackets hold additional weights to increase down pressure.

A front guide wheel and mud scrapers are also available.

Besler offers four working widths: 8 ft, 11 in.; 11 ft, 8 in.; 14 ft, 2 in.; and 15 ft, 2 in., measured end-to-end in the least aggressive setting.

"That's another thing that sets us apart from our competitors, as they only have one size of implement while we have four," Kester says.

Besler's wider design is intended to pull soil from a broader area rather than repeatedly working the same narrow path, which can leave a low divot in the field. For transport, the basket folds up and locks into place.

Manufactured in Nebraska, the Besler Pivot Track Closer is sold through a dealer network across much of the U.S., with its strongest markets in irrigated regions of the Midwest, including Nebraska and Kansas.

Prices vary by size and options, ranging from about \$18,500 to \$23,500.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Besler Industries Inc., P.O. Box B, Cambridge, Neb. 69022 (ph 308-697-4698; info@beslerindustries.com; www.beslerindustries.com).