

Another Job For Round Balers

Implement dealers around Immokalee, Florida, ordinarily don't sell more than one or two round balers each year but last summer, one local dealer came up with a new use for round balers that resulted in the sale of 10 balers. Farmers are using the hay balers to pick up plastic mulch.

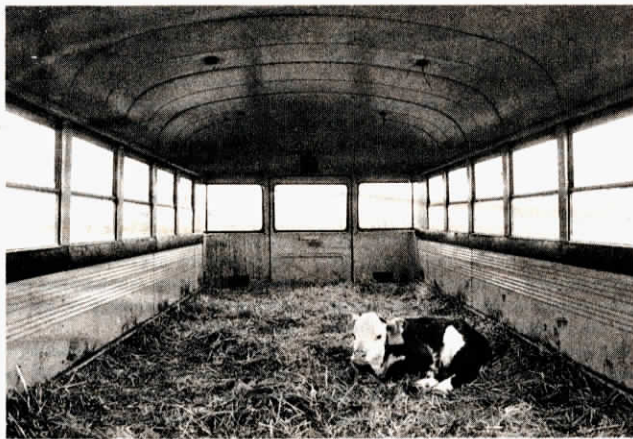
The Immokalee area is a major producer of various vegetable crops, many of which are mulched with wide strips of plastic. Gathering up the plastic by hand costs around \$50 per acre and requires lots of labor. The problem prompted Bob Jacobson, Florida Tractor Co., in Immokalee, to come up with a modification for Owatonna round balers that equips them to pick up plastic and bale it.

The modification simply requires raising the pickup head

about 3 in. so it won't dig into the ground as it picks up the plastic, and fastening thick 2½-in. strips of plastic sheeting to the reel so it won't tangle up. The modifications cost about \$250 and the baler can easily be reconverted to handle hay. Jacobson told FARM SHOW that the idea only works on closed chamber roller balers like the Owatonna and Claas Balers.

Using a round baler to pick up plastic mulch cuts the cost to \$9.00 an acre and the baler can do about 8 acres per day. A separate trip through the field is necessary before the baler runs through to lift the edges of the plastic out of the dirt.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Florida Tractor Co., P.O. Box 190, Immokalee, Fla. 33934 (ph 813 657-2080).



School Bus Calf Shelter

"We can sell all we can produce," says Mickey Kvien at Dietrich & Sons, Valley City, N. Dak., a company that has found a new use for salvaged school buses.

Kvien explains that in addition to selling new and used buses, Dietrich & Sons also salvages older buses — 1973 and before — that it takes in on trade. Many of the mechanical components, such as the engines, transmissions, and drive trains, are interchangeable with components on farm trucks. However, until recently, there was no good steady market for the bodies of these older buses, and auto crushers wouldn't take them.

Then the company hit on the idea of using the bus tops for calf shelters.

"We cut the body off with a metal saw, starting right behind the driver's seat. We cut across the top and then just above the

floor down both sides and across the back. Then, we fasten 3-in. round pipe to the bottom of the sides to act as skids and put a tow hitch on the back. We leave the door on the back end so it's enclosed. The front end is wide open," explains Kvien.

Equipped as described, the bus shelters sell for \$400. The buses can be painted for another \$200. Kvien notes that the windows let sunlight in to help keep young calves warm.

Most of the bus shelters are about 5 ft., 10 in. tall, 20 ft. long and about 8 ft. wide. Kvien notes that the company also sells bus shelters with the floors left in them. Some farmers buy them that way to use as small farrowing sheds or for other on-farm purposes.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dietrich & Sons, Box 777, Valley City, N. Dak. 58072 (ph 701 845-1590).

Toy Machine Shed

Albert Anderst, Medicine Hat, Alberta, cut a 45 gal. fuel tank in half to make a miniature quonset-type machine shed for his grandson Jared.

Anderst used the top of the tank as the end wall and cut a sliding hole in the other end and fabricated a sliding door. He also installed 2 by 2-in. footings and a ½-in. plywood floor.

He ran a clear Christmas tree lightbulb in through the back to light up the interior, which he coated with aluminum paint. Jared stores all his toy farm machinery in the shed, which resembles a shed on the Anderst farm.



Test Hay Moisture With Your Microwave

If you're looking for a quick and accurate method to determine the moisture content of hay and other forages, use a microwave oven.

University of Wisconsin ag engineer, Richard Straub, says a microwave is more accurate than many moisture testers. Here, according to Straub, is how to do it:

Use a 100 gram (about ¼ lb.) sample for ease of figuring.

Place the sample in the microwave, setting it to "cook". For hay that's about ready to bale, cook the sample for 3 to 4 minutes. Next, remove the sample, weigh it and cook it for another 30 seconds. Continue this process until the hay does not

lose any more weight.

Now, weigh the hay again. If you started with a 100 gram sample but now have 70 grams left, you know that the hay was 30% moisture.

The equation for determining hay moisture, no matter what weight unit you use (grams or ounces) is: (Starting weight-dry weight) ÷ starting weight = % moisture.

Straub cautions that if you overdry the hay you'll actually burn it. As a safety precaution he suggests putting a glass of water in with the hay as it cooks so you don't damage the microwave by leaving the hay in too long.

One Farmer's Guide To Ridge Tillage

Ed Huseby started ridge tilling in 1980 along with his father Julius on their west central Minnesota farm. He had such good results he decided to write a book to help other farmers understand the basics.

"As far as I know, it's the only comprehensive guide to ridge tillage on the market, covering all the different aspects from starting out to advanced methods," says Huseby, noting that his main crops are corn and soybeans. He uses a 6-row Buffalo planter and cultivator to work his ridges.

The book includes cost comparisons between conventional and ridge tillage. Huseby says he saves an average of about \$22 per acre by ridge tilling and doesn't sacrifice any yield. "Almost all the people I know who ridge till say they have had

no reduction in yields and, as a bonus, I have more free time between planting and harvesting. As for equipment, I know a number of farmers who sold the conventional equipment they no longer needed, bought new ridge-till equipment, and ended up with money left over."

The book also outlines steps to take for weed control, planting, cultivating, building the ridges, fertilizing, managing residue, wheel spacing, and the effect of ridge tilling on rotation of crops. All the information is presented in such a way that you can apply it to varying conditions and soil types.

The book sells for \$4.95, plus \$1.50 postage.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, A Guide To Ridge Tillage, P.O. Box 202, Pennock, Minn. 56279.