

## Round Bale Silage Makes Good Impression

After running an article last fall on making round bale silage (Vol. 1, No. 5), we heard about a group of farmers in Saskatchewan, Can., who have tried the new silage method. One of the farmers, Roger Puetz (pronounced Pitts) talked with FARM SHOW about his experiences in making round bale silage.

"I can see a lot of prospects for round bale silage in small and medium-sized cattle operations," says Puetz, who farms near Humbolt, Sask. "I use existing haying equipment to make it so my cost is minimal."

Puetz first heard about the new silage method from the same researchers at the Manitoba Department of Agriculture who were featured in our initial FARM SHOW report. His government agricultural representative (similar to your county agent) encouraged him and five other farmers to experiment with the method. They began the test during the summer of 1977.

To make round bale silage, hay is baled at about 60% moisture, stacked immediately at least three bales high and sealed with two or three layers of plastic.

Puetz baled five acres of sweet clover at 57% moisture with a New Holland 850 "beltless" chain and slat-type round baler. Canadian researchers have found that the beltless New Holland round baler is about the only type that can get the high moisture material in and through the baler.

Puetz got 27 bales weighing 1800 lbs. each off those five acres. He stacked them under three layers of polyethylene, sealed the edges with railroad ties and dirt and didn't open the pile until six months later in December.

"We really got some good feed out of there," said Puetz. "On a dry matter basis, it tested right at 15.5% crude protein and 63% TDN."

Some problems cropped up, though, when Puetz resealed the stack until March of this year. Even though it was below zero much of the time, the silage had rotted. "I think the problem can be solved by building the stack near the cattle so it can be self-fed. That would save handling and the heat of the stack would prevent freezing as cattle ate their way through the stack."

Another problem is trapped air pockets in the stack. "Wherever there was air loose in the stack," says Puetz, "the silage was rotten 2 or 3 in. deep." He thinks this problem can be solved by throwing bales on top of the stack and applying pressure to the sides — either by putting the bales in a bunker silo, or building free-standing walls that can be tightened against the sides of the stack with ropes or chains.

Puetz said he will not be making any round bale silage this year because he has sold some of his cattle, but plans to make some the next time he does need extra silage.

# FARM SHOW

## Best Ideas

Got a "best idea" you'd like to share with FARM SHOW readers — a new wrinkle in cropping, livestock, machinery or whatever? Maybe it's still experimental but looks promising. Or, maybe you've already taken the idea beyond the experimental stage. We'd like to hear about it. Write to: Best Ideas, c/o FARM SHOW, 8500 210 St., Lakeville, Minn. 55044.

*Harold M. Johnson, Editor*

## Many Uses For Old Box Cars

Around the western states, old railroad cars may have quit rolling on the rails, but they're still giving other kinds of service on farms and ranches.

Old box cars are showing up as tool sheds, farrowing houses, livestock shelters and grain storage. One man that has been responsible for many of these conversions is Floyd M. Reed, who operates a business out of Alamosa, Colo. In the last five years he has handled more than 1,000 railroad cars and converted them into new uses.

"Box cars are in great demand by farmers for all kinds of storage. Farmers like them because they're strong and fireproof, and they can lock them up. They're using them to store grain, tools, wool, and almost anything you can think of," says Reed.

"Cattlemen buy them for cattle shelters or windbreaks, and one ranch just ordered 50 cars to use for maternity houses."

Reed also has sold many railroad flat cars for use as farm bridges across gullies and ravines.

Reed buys used railroad box cars of all kinds, mostly the 40 ft. length, but occasionally a 50 ft. one. Most of them are straight steel box cars, but there's quite a demand for insulated refrigerator cars, both the type with ice chests and mechanical refrigeration units.

Reed has a crew of 5 or 6 men conditioning the old cars. They remove the wheels and some of the other hardware, then load the boxes on trucks to be hauled to their destination.

Reed's crews leave the doors on when they can, so the car can be used as a locked storage building. Cars without working doors make good livestock units. A reconditioned car may sell for anywhere between \$800 and \$2,000, depending on its size and condition.

Now past retirement age,

Reed doesn't know how long he will keep at the box car reconditioning business. He doesn't know of anybody else doing this, but hopes someone will keep it going because there is a demand for as many cars as he can handle.

For more details, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Floyd M. Reed, La Jara, Colo. 81140.

## New "Wrinkle" In Double Cropping

A North Dakota innovator is experimenting with a new "wrinkle" in double cropping. He's attempting to seed winter wheat and spring wheat simultaneously, then harvest two successive crops from the single planting. The second crop would thus be produced with absolutely zero tillage since it's "hitchhiked" onto the first

tillage-planting operation.

To begin with, he installed mechanical dividers in his grain drill with alternate compartments filled with spring and winter wheat. He's also experimenting with a different method of planting spring and winter wheat simultaneously. Instead of keeping the seed separate, he blends the wheats together before going to the field. For example, he has blended Roughrider winter wheat and Kitt spring wheat in various blends involving 20, 40 and 60 lbs. of winter wheat with 60 and 75 lbs. per acre of spring wheat. Winter kill of the winter wheat has been the biggest problem. At this early stage, it appears that blending the two wheats works as good or better than keeping the wheats separate but planting them simultaneously. We'll keep you posted in future issues on how this experimental "best idea" turns out.