SPECIALLY-DESIGNED HUMIDITY PROBE TELLS OPTIMUM TIME TO BALE

Windrow Tester Takes Guesswork Out Of Baling

Most farmers think they can pull a handful of hay out of a windrow and tell if it's ready for baling. Often they're right but Missouri farmer Howard Dickey says he and many other farmers are probably just as often wrong.

"We usually want to get going as soon as we can so we tell ourselves the hay is ready when it really isn't, resulting in wet bales that spoil or don't contain optimum quality hay," says Dickey, who's come up with a new "Windrow Tester" that he says takes the guesswork out of when to bale.

It consists of a 6-in. dia. humidity sensor encased inside a 10-in. tall cone-shaped housing with slots all down the side. You slip the tester into the windrow and, in 6 min., you get a reading. In Dickey's case, if the reading is 35 percent or under, he starts baling. If you're making round bales that will sit outside, he says you can probably bale when the tester reads between 40 and 45°. The optimum reading will vary depending on location and on what type of bales you're making and where they'll be stored.

The reading is not the moisture content of the hay but rather humidity within the windrow. Using a temperature reading, that you also get off the tester, you can calculate the actual moisture content of the hay, if desired.

A tall metal flag on a wire is set at the critical point on the tester. In Dickey's case, he sets the flag at 35 percent and the flag lets him see at a glance if the needle is at 35 or below. The flag also makes it easy to find the tester in the windrow.

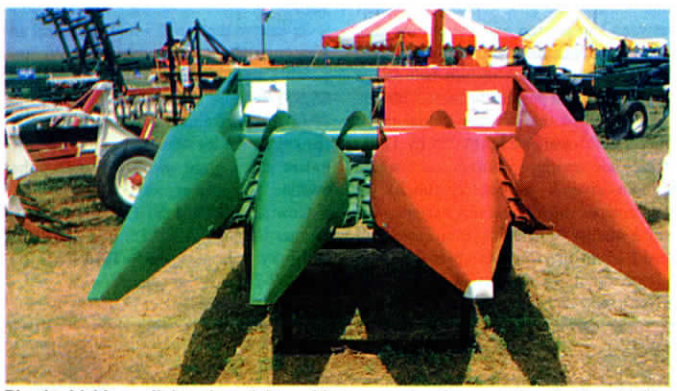
"Guys will place it in a windrow in one field and start in another field that's ready to bale. Then when they get to the field with the tester in it, they can look and see if it's ready," he notes.

Tall metal flag on tester lets you know when hay is ready to bale.

"Making hay is an inexact science. I'm trying to come up with some scientific measures that make the whole process more precise. After last year, when we had more than double the usual rainfall, many farmers in this area had a lot of hay spoilage because we had so few days when we could bale," says Dickey.

He's been selling his windrow tester for $125. Most of the cost is for the industrial grade hygrometer he uses.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Howard Dickey, Dickey Farms, Rt. 1, Box 120A, Lathrop, Mo. 64465 (ph 816 740-3641).



Plastic shields are lighter in weight and less expensive than metal gathering shields.

"SLIPPERY" SHIELDS MAKE IT EASY TO SWITCH TO NARROW ROWS

Plastic Replacement Shields For Cornheads

If you need to replace broken or worn gathering shields on your combine head, or want an easy way to switch from wide rows to narrow 22-in. rows, you'll want to take a close look at these new plastic replacement shields.

The plastic bolt-on shields are designed for Case-IH and Deere cornheads and are available in 22- and 30-in. wide models. They're hinged on back and pivot forward for easy service access.

"They're lighter in weight and less expensive than metal gathering shields, and they have a slippery surface that results in less sticking or bunching of leaves and husks in damp conditions," says inventor Von Grotto of Litchfield, Minn. "They work great for switching to 22-in. rows because they eliminate the need to narrow up the original tin, weld it back together, and repaint it. All you do is move the row units over and add new ones. They're available in matching colors. The color goes all the way through the shield so there's no paint to wear through. They'll always look like new."

End row units sell for $219; 22-in. row units sell for $239, and 30-in. row units sell for $269.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Von Grotto, 60113 CSAH 16, Litchfield, Minn. 55355 (ph 612 693-8411).

Uhnken used parts from a pair of junked Volkswagen cars to build "wide-track" ATV. He uses it for spot spraying in soybeans and to seed waterways and terraces.

"IT'S AS WIDE AS A CAR AND BUILT LOW TO THE GROUND SO IT CAN'T BE TIPPED"

Wide-Track "ATV" Built From Car Parts

By C.F. Marley

Illinois farmer Butch Uhnken didn't want to spend the money for a commercial-built 4-wheeler so he built his own "wide-track" ATV using parts from a pair of junked Volkswagen cars.

"It's as wide as a car and has only 8 inches of clearance so it won't tip over easily," says Uhnken, of Jacksonville, who uses the rig for spot spraying in soybeans and to seed waterways and terraces.

Uhnken's ATV is equipped with 28-in. tall "fat tires" (12 in. wide) off a Deere small square baler in back and 12-in. Ford Pinto tires in front. A 20-gal. spray tank on back is powered by an electric pump. He can also mount an electric-powered grass seeder on back.

Both axles came off VW Beetles. Uhnken cut 3 ft. off a Super Beetle frame and then welded a steel plate across one end, welding the front axle on. He bolted another steel plate across the top of the frame to make a floor. Power is supplied by a new Kawasaki 2-cyl., 20 hp water-cooled engine - the same engine in Deere's 425 riding mower. The ATV's belt-driven, 4-speed manual transmission came from the Super Beetle and is geared down by a 2 1/2-in. double belt pulley mounted on the engine crankshaft and an 8-1/2 in. pulley mounted on the ATV's drive shaft. The original Volkswagen engine was mounted backward so Uhnken had to reverse the direction of the new engine. He solved the problem by bolting the input sides of two identical hydraulic gear pumps together in order to reverse direction. A pulley mounted on the output side of the pumps is used to belt-drive the transaxle.

"I can go almost anywhere without worrying about tipping over," says Uhnken. "The wheels are spaced 6 ft. apart and will straddle two 36-in. rows. I have 10 1/2 miles of road sides to spray so the wide track really helps. Top speed is about 23 mph. It has the Volkswagen car's torsion bar suspension system, steering wheel, and steering gear so it drives just like a car. It also has the original foot throttle, clutch, and brakes. I wish it had a little more than 8 in. of clearance so I could use it in taller soybeans. I paid $1,050 for the engine, $100 for the Super Beetle, and $200 for a new Deere tractor seat. My total cost was about $1,600. A 4-wheel ATV would have cost at least $4,000.

"I had been using a tractor-pulled trailer and spray tank to spot spray, but getting around all the drainage tile stand pipes and waterways and dams on our land was awkward and slow. One problem is that the radiator, which came out of an old Yugo car, is mounted right next to the driver's seat so the driver gets hot. I plan to move the engine back and mount the spray tank next to the seat."

The rig also has speedometer and oil and temperature gauges and is fitted with a rear-view mirror.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Butch Uhnken, 25 W. Fair, Jacksonville, Ill. 62650 (ph 217 245-4359).