

Farmer Makes Stacked Bale Silage

Alvin Findlay of Snowflake, Manitoba saves money by not having to hire a custom bale wrapper. He makes his own silage bales by covering big stacks of bales with plastic.

Findlay makes the bale silage 190 bales at a time. On the bottom layer of the stack, he sets the end bale of each row on a layer of dirt so it tips the outer end of the bale towards the inside of the stack. This is a safety feature that prevents the ends of the stacks from falling out.

His bales are 54 to 56 in. in dia. and they're stacked in a 5, 4, 3, 2 formation (five bales across the bottom row, four in the next row, etc.). "Having a stack formation that's five bales wide on the bottom and two-wide on the top, leaves a crease in the plastic at the top of the stack, which collects rainwater and keeps the plastic tight," Findlay explains.

He covers each stack with a 50 by 100-ft. piece of silage plastic, which costs about \$300, compared to \$772 for custom bale wrapping in a tube.

"We try not to put the silage plastic on when it's windy. Three people climb up onto the stack and pull the plastic over from one side to the other," he says. "We bank dirt at the bottom of the plastic to seal it, and then use a Shop-Vac to suck the air out."

Findlay pokes a small hole through the plastic to insert the vacuum hose, and lets it run for half a day, "just to be safe." It pulls the plastic up tight against the bales.

After removing the hose, Findlay uses string to tie the vacuum hole closed.

Findlay says he's been making silage bale stacks for 10 years with great success. He points out that his cows prefer silage bales to dry hay, and they don't waste any, either.

"The calves are in there at one week old, eating it," he adds.

Findlay uses his system on straight alfalfa bales, greenfeed oats bales and even rye, with tremendous success.

He bales the swaths at 40 to 50 percent moisture and the bales weigh up to 2,500 lbs.

"Silage bales alleviate the problem of waiting for good haying weather, and they guarantee that you don't lose any leaves," he says. "I like the fact that it eliminates the need to rake - that is time consuming and hard on the hay."

This year Findlay put up about 2,000 bales of feed this way.

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Alvin Findlay makes 190 silage bales at a time by covering big stacks of bales with plastic.



Stack formation is five bales wide on the bottom and two wide at the top. This leaves a crease in the plastic at the top of stack, which collects rainwater and helps keep plastic tight.



Garage door opener is housed under a 14 by 29-in. cover made from a salvaged heating duct. It's operated by remote control.



Cable runs from center of gate to garage door opener inside a nearby barn. Hathaway uses a remote control in his tractor or pickup to activate the opener.

Garage Door Opener Powers Farm Gate

S. Doug VanDyke, Salem, Ore., hated it when deer destroyed his yard and garden. That's why he built a 6-ft. high fence around his place that's about 1,000 ft. long with a gate on it. But the manual gate meant he and everyone else had to get out of their vehicles to open and close it. Not wanting to spend a lot of money on a new opener, VanDyke made one using a used garage door opener he found at a garage sale. With additional parts, his automatic gate cost about \$20.

The opener and other components are housed under a 14 by 29-in. cover made from a salvaged heating duct set next to a block

pillar.

He built the brackets to stand out about 12 to 15 in. from the wood post and the gate. He added a pivot bracket for the motor end and welded a pivot pin on the traveling carriage of the opener. They can use the remote control from the house.

"The deer stay out and we and our guests can come and go easily," he says.

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Bin has a large tractor tire under it - with the beads cut off and turned inside out - to act as a feed trough.



Hopper Bin Tire Feeder

Feeding livestock is an easy task for Alvin Findlay at Snowflake, Manitoba.

Findlay put three 1,800 bu. hopper bottom bulk bins in his pasture, and another 3,000 bu. bin in a corral by the barn. Each bin has a large tractor tire feeder under it (with the beads cut off and turned inside out) to act as a feed trough.

"All I have to do to feed cattle is to open

up the slide on the bottom of each bin once a day to fill the tires," says Findlay.

He poured a cement pad under each bin to have a level feeding area. The tire actually sits in a recessed hole at the bottom of the bin, he says.

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Drive-Through Electric Gate

"It saves me a lot of steps when entering the feedlot because I don't have to get on and off the tractor all the time," says Perry Hathaway, Claypool, Ind., who came up with a simple design for an inexpensive drive-through electric gate that eliminates the need to get in and out of the vehicle.

The gate is made of a fiberglass pole wrapped with electric fence tape. The end of the fiberglass pole fits into a short piece of metal pipe that's hinged to a piece of channel iron bolted to the gate post. A bolt goes through the end of the pipe to form the hinge.

A cable runs from the center of the gate up over an insulator on top of the gate post to a garage door opener inside a nearby barn. The cable attaches to the chain on the opener.

Hathaway uses a remote control in his tractor or pickup to activate the garage door opener.

"It works as good as any commercial au-

tomatic gate opener and cost very little to build," says Hathaway, who has used the gate for six years. "The gate doesn't raise a full 90 degrees but does raise far enough that I can drive through with no problem.

"I came up with the idea because cattle were jumping over the cattle guard that's now under the gate. I tried installing a conventional gate over the cattle guard, but sometimes during the winter the snow would drift in so high that I couldn't swing the gate open. By being able to raise this gate up-and-down I don't have that problem.

"It didn't cost much to build. I got the garage door opener for free from someone else. I paid about \$16 for the fiberglass rod. A conventional electric drive-through gate sells for about \$500."

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