



Rolling Stalk Chopper can be adjusted to match your residue level and your soils. "It depends on how you want the field to look when you're done," says Cliff Kester, Besler Industries.

## Rolling Stalk Chopper Adjusts To Field Conditions

Besler Rolling Stalk Choppers prep fields for planting quickly and as aggressively as you want. While wet soils may need another pass, most fields are ready to plant after chopping. Residue is chopped up and tire-tearing stubble is sliced and diced as the seedbed is worked.

"The combination of Bt corn and the residue from high-yielding hybrids makes cornfields a challenge in the spring," says Cliff Kester, Besler Industries. "Whether you hit the field with our Rolling Stalk Chopper in the fall or early spring, the field is ready to plant under normal conditions. Best of all, you can adjust the machine and how you operate it to match your residue level and your soils."

If aggressive is what you want, put the rollers at their sharpest 21-degree angle, and they'll churn up residue and soil. Line them up straight, and they'll work residue with minimal soil disturbance. You can even select the number of blades to increase or decrease impact on soil and residue.

"The way you set it up depends on how you want the field to look when you're done," says Kester. "In addition to adjusting gang angle, you can set depth and operating speed."

Besler offers two rolling stalk choppers available in 4 through 16-row configurations with operating speeds of 5 to 12 mph. The front and rear toolbars are 7 by 7-in. square steel tubing, which can be filled with sand for added weight to slice through extra heavy residue.

"Adding sand adds 25 lbs. per foot of toolbar," says Kester. "With an 8-row unit, you have 20 ft. of toolbar front and another 20 rear for 1,000 lbs. of extra weight when filled. With gauge wheels, you can always take it out of the ground, but the weight helps it go into the ground."

Options on both units include gauge wheels for depth control and tongue and dual lift rear

wheels for pull-type applications. Spiked tooth or chain link harrows are also optional. Rolling gangs come standard with 5 blades in the front and 6 rear (5/6) or the optional 6 front and 7 rear (6/7) design.

"The 5/6 may be too aggressive on sand, and if planting on ridges it will actually knock the ridges out," explains Kester. "The 6/7 option will chop residue into finer pieces, but won't go as deep."

The Model 5400 is available with angled rolling gangs welded in place at the factory. The Model 7000, with its individually adjustable gangs, offers more variability in working the soil/residue mix.

"We set the angle of the gangs the way you want them at the factory on both the 5400 and the 7000," says Kester. "With the 7000, you can change them as needed later. Maintenance is minimal with either unit. Triple sealed bearings require light lubrication at 2000-acre intervals. Blades are the main wear point, and replacement is expected every 5,000 to 8,000 acres. Blades can be sharpened or replaced by removing two bolts on each blade.

Prices range from \$7,288 for a Model 5400 4-row to \$32,000 for a Model 7000 with 16 rows and folding arms for transit. Horsepower needs vary depending on number of rows, pull-type (less hp required) or rear mount and configuration. Lifting weight is often the limiting factor when sizing to a tractor, says Kester.

"A rear mount, 12-row unit weighing 8,000 lbs. will most likely require a 180-hp tractor to lift and pull it," he explains. "Add the pull type option, and a smaller tractor may be able to handle it."

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Models are available from 4 to 16 rows wide and with folding arms for transport.



Electric Bit Blanket (left) wraps around a bit and is secured by a Velcro closure. Bitten Bit Warmer uses heat packs that slip inside pouch that holds bit.



## How To Warm Up Bridle Bits

Putting a frozen bridle bit in a horse's mouth is like putting your tongue on a flagpole in winter. It's uncomfortable to say the least, and may cause lip, tongue or gum injuries.

Horse owners now have some simple options to protect their animals.

The electric Bit Blanket wraps around a bit and is secured by a Velcro closure. Plug it in and in the amount of time it takes to groom and saddle a horse (10 to 20 minutes), the bit is warm and comfortable for the horse.

"It only uses 4 watts of energy — like a nightlight," says Jamie Sturgess who developed and sells Bit Blankets from New Hampshire.

The 6-in. wide heater comes in red, green, blue and black and accommodates all size bits. The polyester blend fabric is stain resistant and waterproof. Bit Blankets sell for \$39.95 and have a 60-day money-back guarantee and 1-year warranty on defects.

Another option is the Bitten Bit Warmer, which has a similar design with the same type of fabric and also fastened by Velcro. It's portable, however, as it heats with heat packs slipped inside the pouch with the bit.

"Some facilities don't allow boarders to use electricity," says Pat McFarland of the Bitten Store, who worked with a horse owner to develop the bit warmer. McFarland's husband, Martin, was familiar with warmers when he lived in Alaska. Disposable or reusable packs heat the bit up in 10 to 20 minutes. The reusable packs have liquid and a metal disc to click to activate it to create heat. The pack can be boiled between uses to return it to liquid and use again.

The warmers come with a lanyard and sell for \$24.95 with shipping. Reusable heat packs cost \$4.95. Bitten Bit Warmers come in six colors (burgundy, blue, green, mocha, black and purple) and have a 90-day money back guarantee and lifetime warranty on defects. Since they are 5 in. wide, they also work on mini horse bits.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bit Blanket, 16 Peaslee Court, Hampstead, N.H. 03841 (ph 603 329-3044; www.bitblanket.com) or Bitten Bit Warmers, Bitten Store, P.O. Box 18413, Boulder, Colo. 80308 (ph 888 661-9091; www.bittenstore.com).

## Cows Love Corn/Sunflower Silage

When Kevin Ferguson started feeding his dairy cows a blend of sunflower and corn silage, he "couldn't beat them off with a stick."

"The cattle love it. It smells like fresh-baked bread," he says.

Last June, the Rosendale, Wis. organic dairy farmer experimented by planting 14 acres of corn mixed with sunflowers. He selected an oil sunflower variety with the goal of improving butterfat and protein levels.

"It's doing exactly what I want it to do," Ferguson says. "Generally I average 3.8 or 3.9 butterfat test this time of year. This year, I have a 4.47 test card. Protein is usually 2.9 to 3. My average now is 3.36."

He planted half corn and half sunflowers at 32,000 seeds/acre. At harvest, he filled a 9 by 200-ft. ag bag and four 20-ft. chopping boxes of silage at 60 percent moisture.

Because he double-cropped after harvesting peas, the crop wasn't planted until June. Ferguson cultivated it twice and waited until the heads turned black before he harvested.

He was pleased with the Sierra Organic sunflower variety from Blue River Hybrids that he selected after two years of research. He notes that next time he will plant fewer seeds per acre to give the sunflowers more room to produce plate-size blooms.

"The biggest challenge was to keep the blackbirds out of it," Ferguson says.

Ferguson's experiment has caught the



Photo by Sara Bredezen, The Country Today

Last summer Kevin Ferguson started feeding his dairy cows a blend of sunflowers and corn silage. "The cows loved it," he says.

attention of local media and farmers, but he isn't giving all his secrets away — such as his planting pattern. He'd like to work with a university trial.

"This isn't for everyone," he notes, because it requires modifications. "You have to change your mineral base because the oil in this silage is higher."

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