Mini Electric Fence Keeps Mice Out Of Motorhome

David Heng, Marshalltown, Iowa, lives in town but during the winter he stores his 35-ft. motorhome in an old machine shed about 15 miles away. He got tired of dealing with mice that chewed up everything in sight. Traps and repellants weren't the answer, so he finally installed a miniature electric fence all the way around the motorhome.

The fence consists of a 1-ft. wide strip of hardware cloth fastened to 1-ft. tall wooden dowels inserted into a base made from 2 by 4's. Metal flashing angled outward, covers the base. A fence charger, which runs off a 120-volt outlet in the machine shed, charges the fence. The hardware cloth connects to the charger's positive wire, and the flashing connects to the negative wire. The mouse climbs up the flashing, and as soon as it contacts the hardware cloth it gets a big jolt of electricity and dies.

"It works somewhat like the electric fences that livestock farmers use. Nothing gets by it. It kills all the mice that try to climb over it instantly," says Heng. "I came up with the idea 2 years ago and haven't had a single mouse get into our motorhome since. A local farmer stores his combine in the shed, and there's always some corn in the head which means there are always a lot of mice around. Last fall I found about 10 dead mice next to it."

He says his mini electric fence is much more reliable than traps and repellants. "I can't be driving out 15 miles every day to check on traps and remove dead mice, whereas an electric fence is always working as long as you have electricity. I think the same idea would work to keep mice out of anything in storage, including antique tractors and classic cars."

He started with 50 ft. of 2 ft. wide, 1/4-in. hardware cloth and 100 ft. of 8-in. wide metal flashing. He cut the hardware cloth in half to produce 100 ft. of fence. He laid a series of 10-ft. long 2 by 4's together flat on the shed's cement floor, then nailed them together to form a rectangle around the motorhome. He drilled holes about 10 ft. apart into the 2 by 4's, inserted a series of 1-ft. high dowels in them, and then zip tied the hardware cloth to the dowels.

He stapled the flashing onto the 2 by 4's, bending it over the edge of the boards and then angling it toward the floor. To insulate the hardware cloth from the shed's cement floor, he cut a slot in a 5/8-in. garden hose and then set the hardware cloth into it. There's about 1/2 in. of space between the hardware cloth and flashing so the fence won't short out.

"I added flashing because I didn't know if the shock would be strong enough with just the cement floor as the ground," says Heng. "Also, the shed's floor isn't level but I can bend the flashing to match the contour of the floor and keep mice from crawling underneath."

An electric fence charger hooks up to 1-ft. tall wire fence that's mounted on a 2 by 4 base covered by metal flashing.

He added a ground wire across the top of all the dowels just in case a mouse ever jumps across the flashing to the hardware cloth and tries to climb over the fence. "The ground wire is negative and the hardware cloth is positive, so when the mouse hits the ground wire he dies," says Heng.

The mini electric fence didn't cost much to build. "I paid $59 for the fencer, $20 for the hardware cloth, and $3 apiece for ten 4-ft. long dowels which I cut down. My total cost was less than $100," says Heng.

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Old Uni-Harvester Powers Huge Grain Conveyor

North Dakota grain farmer Andy Steinberger runs and moves his huge 20-in. wide, 110-ft. long belt conveyor with an old self-propelled New Idea Uni-Harvester power unit that he calls "The Goat". He says the Uni-Harvester has more than enough power to move and operate the huge conveyor. It's easier for Steinberger to line up the spout with the bin because of the extra maneuverability, and using the "Goat" also frees up the conventional tractor that had been running the conveyor for other jobs.

"I had the idea to make a self-propelled conveyor and even talked to one company about making one," Steinberger says. "When they told me the cost was going to be around $80,000 for the power unit, I changed my mind in a hurry and went to plan B."

Steinberger bought the old New Idea Uni-Harvester drive train from Jack Welti, a farmer he learned about in FARM SHOW. During the course of 2 cold Dakota winters he removed the cab, the metal sheeting around the motor, the hydraulic system, and power train components. He converted the main drive from the engine that previously operated the implements into a pto system to power the conveyor. He also widened the rear steering wheels and attached a drawbar linkage so he can lift and move the conveyor from one bin to another. Says Steinberger, "If the Uni does give out at some point I can just unhook it and use a tractor again. Right now it works just fine, especially with the power controls close to the ground for easy access."

Initially Steinburger was going to convert the Uni into a hydrostatic pto drive, but after closer examination he found that the clutch drive functioned just fine and didn't require all the extra conversion work. His "Goat" has a 200 hp Allis Chalmers engine that supplies more than enough power to operate the conveyor and run the hydraulics that raise and lower it. Hydraulics also power the swing conveyor. The 6-cyl. engine can rev up to 2,800 rpm's, but most of the time he runs it at 1,800 rpm's, which is ideal for the conveyor.

Andy Steinberger uses an old self-propelled New Idea Uni-Harvester power unit to operate and move his big 20-in. wide, 110-ft. long belt conveyor.

"I've got about $5,000 invested into buying the Uni and the parts I needed, so that's a long ways from the $80,000 that someone else wanted to supply a rig that would do the same thing," says Steinburger.

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All-Terrain Zero-Turn Mower

The new TRX tracked zero-turn mower from Altoz can handle steep slopes and ditches, wet or dry, as well as soft turf and sandy ground.

"We looked at the shortcomings of wheeled, zero-turn mowers on the market, like lack of traction on slopes, difficulty in any kind of soft turf or wet ground, and down time from flat tires," says Karl Bjorkman, Altoz. "Rain or even heavy dew can delay commercial mowers on slopes and ditch banks. Municipalities and golf courses use weed whips around water retention areas and sand traps where they can't run mowers."

For Altoz, located in the same area in Minnesota as Arctic Cat and Polaris snowmobile companies, the answer was simple. "We had a lot of people in our company who knew about tracks and down pressure," says Bjorkman. "Our engineers came up with the tracked design, a first in the industry."

The TRX is more than a zero-turn mower with added tracks. Trademarked TorqFlex front suspension and rear torsional suspension provide a smooth ride. The 11-in. wide, commercial grade track and flat-free front tires reduce maintenance and down time.

The mower is available in two models, a 61-in. deck powered by a Kohler Command Pro EFI 33 hp engine or a 66-in. deck powered by a Vanguard EFI 37 hp engine. Commercial twin Hydro-Gear ZT5400 transmissions power the tracks at a top speed of 10 mph. Options include rough cut and finish mower blade systems.

"It is the combination of the large engines, Hydro-Gear transmissions and TRX track system that makes it one of a kind and allows it to go where no traditional zero-turn mower has gone before," says Bjorkman.

TRX tracked zero-turn mower has front suspension and rear torsional suspension to provide a smooth ride. The company says it can go where traditional zero-turn mowers can't.

Depending on hp and deck option, suggested retail is $18,000 to $19,900.

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