

Price-Shocked Dairyman Got Into The Spreader Business

When David Foster needed a new manure spreader, he couldn't believe what it was going to cost.

So he went out and found a company that would provide a basic spreader that he could customize. Now the Kansas dairyman is selling his Terrakat manure spreaders at half the cost of competitive machines.

"I thought the price I was quoted for a replacement, which is essentially a box with chain and beaters, was outrageous," says Foster. "I started looking outside the U.S. for alternatives."

After talking to several European companies and touring their facilities, he settled on a Turkish manufacturer who already marketed spreaders in 20 countries, mostly in Europe.

"They have a top-of-the-line factory and build most of their own parts," says Foster. "They've been willing to do anything I ask."

Foster made changes in the company's design, which was typically used for dry manure such as chicken litter. The first change was to go to larger tires to reduce compaction and tracking. He added a rubber belt to the bottom of the rear gate and replaced the screened front with a solid panel.

"We wanted the box sealed up tight to hold slurry and didn't want it dripping out front or back," says Foster. "The original design allowed the operator to reach back and control the spreader's hydraulic valves. We shifted them to the cab."

One of the things he didn't change was the flail style beater. "Other beater styles plug up with trash, like tire sidewalls or even chunks of concrete, and you have to stop to dislodge and remove the objects," says Foster. "Custom manure haulers complain that it can break shafts and tear up equipment. With my flail style, the paddle gives, and the trash goes right through."

Confident other livestock producers would like the design and the price, Foster ordered 2, including one for his dairy. The first one sold at the first farm show he took it to, and a second buyer bought Foster's slightly used unit.

"He towed it across the state at 68 mph, put it to use, and a month later ordered a second and larger model," says Foster.

The larger model is a T34 (34-ton) spreader that Foster has priced at \$70,000. "I've been told a comparable, competitive spreader sells for \$140,000," he says.



Kansas dairyman David Foster says his Terrakat manure spreader costs only about half as much as competitive machines.

Foster is offering a range of spreaders, including 5, 10, 15, 20, 28 and 34-ton models. He notes that cost savings on smaller units are not as great as with larger models due to shipping. However, he adds that even the \$43,000, 20-ton T20 is priced at \$10,000 under the competition.

Foster is far from the first to go to Turkey for cost savings. He notes that all smaller New Holland tractors are made in the country, as are a wide range of disk blades, sweeps and

chisel points for U.S. tillage tools.

"I had no idea how much we import from Turkey," says Foster. "As a dairyman, I sell my milk at world market prices, the same with my corn and soybeans. If I can cut my costs buying on that same world market, I will. I found a deal for myself and am sharing it with others."

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"Gopher Getter" Clears Up Hay Fields

Murray Pask had a gopher problem in his seed alfalfa fields until he came up with his "Gopher General". Its 20-in. cutting disk and torpedo-shaped shank deliver fumigant tablets to gas gophers in the ground. It covers 20 acres an hour and provides control at less than \$10 per acre.

"Before we came up with the Gopher General, you could cross the farm from one side to the other, just stepping on gopher mounds," says Pask. "We tried traps, manually placing fumigant tablets, and various machines that claimed they could control them, but nothing else got the job done."

The Gopher General is designed for ease of use and safety. One lever controls everything. Activate it and the disk goes into the ground, followed by the shank with a torpedo shaped tube at its end. The fan also starts immediately. It blows slow-release fumigant tablets from the sealed hopper out the end of the torpedo and into the newly formed tunnels.

"The disk cuts through roots to keep them from wrapping around the shank," says Pask. "It is important that it stays clean so it leaves only a narrow slit above the tunnel.

Two pneumatic packing wheels seal the slit behind the shank."

Push the lever and everything happens in reverse. The fan stops and tablet dispenser stops, followed by withdrawal of the shank and the cutting disk. As the shank comes out of the ground, scrapers automatically remove mud in preparation for the next use.

The heavy-duty Gopher General is built to handle rocky soils. An actuator system allows the disk to ride up as much as 14 in., and the shank and torpedo can pivot back and up as much as 18 in. to clear obstacles before reentering the ground.

The packer wheels move independent of the disk and shank, maintaining preset pressure provided by the actuator system. However, they too can move as needed to clear obstacles.

"Gopher tunnels are usually 4 to 6 in. deep," explains Pask. "We create new tunnels at 10 to 12-in. depths. When gophers enter the new tunnel, they are exposed to the gas being released by the tablets."

Pask recalls the not-so-good old days of gopher control. "Gopher General means no more hand labor trapping or being exposed to fumigant gas," he says. "Instead of finding



Pull-type machine uses a torpedo-shaped shank and a fan to deliver fumigant tablets into newly formed tunnels, gassing gophers to death.

10 gophers on every acre, now we see only about 10 per 160 acres."

The Gopher General is a heavy-duty machine, but only requires about 50 hp. to pull it through a field. It is priced at \$22,000 (U.S.) Check out the video at farmshow.com.

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Two-wheeled machine covers 20 acres an hour and provides control at less than \$10 per acre.

Heavy Packer Produces Better Silage

Packing bunker silage with heavy 4-WD tractors has been common practice for years, but that might change if the Max Pack silage compaction roller catches on. Hooked to a tractor 3-pt. hitch, the 32-in. dia. Max Pack roller squeezes air out of silage more effectively than tractor tires because of its unique design.

Andrew Roosendaal of Zuidervaart Agri says the Max Pack is especially effective because of the concentrated weight on the roller, along with 4-in. tall fins that provide concentrated compression. The fins also provide a raking action that levels silage as the roller is being pulled over a bunker.

Four different models of the Max Pack are 8 to 13 ft. wide and weigh from 7,700 to 10,600 lbs. when filled with water. Roosendaal says internal baffles prevent

water from sloshing when the roller is moving and provide a continuous packing action.

The Max Pack roller is guided by a heavy-duty frame that hooks to a standard CAT III 3-pt. hitch. Metal bump wheels on the frame corners let the implement work right next to bunker walls without hampering the roller movement or damaging the side of a bunker. A hydraulic cylinder moves the roller up to 3 ft. left or right from the tractor to aid packing and provide safer operation, especially when silage is above the bunker walls.

Roosendaal says the Max Pack does an outstanding job of squeezing air out of silage, including right next to bunker walls, packing it tightly to preserve quality and provide excellent quality stored feed. Depending on model size the Max Packer can be mounted on smaller MFWD tractors up to large -WDs.



Roller's 4-in. tall fins provide concentrated compression, forcing air out of silage.

Pricing starts at \$10,150 CDN.

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