



Self-propelled cleaning cart has an auger on front that gathers litter and feeds it to an apron, which carries it up and into hopper.

New Way To Clean Layer Houses

The Litter Loader from Automated Ag Solutions makes shoveling out layer houses a thing of the past. Only 24 in. wide, the motorized cleaning cart travels the aisles between layer cages, picking up debris as it goes.

"After 10 years of shoveling litter and pushing litter-filled carts the length of the chicken house, I knew there had to be a better way," says Scott Gochenaur. "At first I visualized a motorized cart I could shovel into, but I didn't want to shovel anymore. I figured there had to be a way to pick up the litter."

Gochenaur's first prototype was a modified snowblower that would throw the litter into a cart behind him. That didn't work, but it got the creative process started, and ideas started to come together in his mind.

"I can figure things out, but I don't have a welding shop where I can make things," says Gochenaur. "I described my ideas to a company that manufactures feed carts and mixers, but they weren't interested. They did agree to build the drivable part of a chassis to my specifications."

Gochenaur then worked with a local welding shop to add a hopper and the pickup assembly he wanted.

"I took it home and tried different things until I had something that worked pretty well," says Gochenaur.

The motorized cart has an operator's station at the rear, and an auger at the front of the cart to gather litter and feed it to an apron that carries it up and into the hopper. Once the hopper is full, the Litter Loader is driven out of the barn where an auger in the hopper unloads the material. A Honda motor powers a hydraulic pump with hydraulic motors on the drive wheels, the augers and the apron,

as well as the unloading auger. A joystick controls forward and back movement of each drive wheel for turning or straight-line travel.

"My original intent was to find a better way to take care of my problem," says Gochenaur. "When I realized how well it worked, I figured others had to be as tired of shoveling as I was."

Getting his prototype to market has not been simple. The welding shop wasn't interested in getting into manufacturing, but the company that built the motorized chassis was. However, they weren't interested in selling it. Automated Ag Solutions agreed to handle marketing and distribution.

A planned introduction at poultry industry shows this year didn't materialize, as shows were cancelled due to COVID-19. Gochenaur and Automated Ag Solutions are spreading the word with ads and personal contacts.

The Litter Loader is priced at \$13,000 and weighs around 1,000 lbs. It is 24 in. wide, about 6 ft. long and 4 1/2 ft. high. The hopper has a capacity of about 30 cu. ft. It's fabricated from stainless steel, as are other key components, all designed to stand up to the harsh layer house environment.

"My layer house is about 400 ft. long with 7 aisles to clean," says Gochenaur. "In the past, when we cleared out a flock, it took 2 weeks to clean out the aisles. I expect I'll be able to do it in 2 days with my Litter Loader. I think it would work equally well in a cage-free environment."

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"RollBedders" Make Cargo Hauling Easier

"My new RollBedder dollies let you load and unload cargo without having to climb in and out of the pickup bed," says Alan VanNahmen, Farm Buddy Co., Columbus, Ind.

The low-profile dollies are designed to be placed in the bed grooves, toward the back one third of the bed. VanNahmen sells a kit that includes 4 dollies, which are designed to handle loads up to 400 lbs. No alterations are required to the bed.

"The dollies can be used on major brand pickups with OEM painted floors or spray-on liners, such as Line-X," says VanNahmen.

He also says you simply place a sheet of plywood over the dollies to roll in and out, or use the dollies on any liner that can roll in and out of the pickup bed.

A package of 4 RollBedder dollies retails



A piece of plywood goes over the four RollBedder dollies that are placed in pickup bed grooves.

for \$40 plus S&H and can be ordered on the company website.

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Bob Stevenson says his loader-mounted, 3-sided pallet caddies make it easy to store and move firewood.

Pallet Caddy Stores Firewood

"I made 3-sided caddies out of old pallets to make an easy way to store and move firewood with my tractor and loader," says Bob Stevenson, a Pennsylvania retiree. His design uses a base pallet sitting flat with vertical pallets standing upright on three sides, attached by wood screws. The simple design allows easy filling, stacking, storing, retrieval and dumping.

"Using the loader on my Deere 870 to move empty or full pallet boxes works great," Stevenson says. "I fill them by the woodpile, set them in a row for curing, then cover them with canvas or rubber. I keep 3 or 4 of the full pallets inside my shed and use the tractor to haul them to the house during heating season."

Before dumping a pallet at the house, Stevenson ties it to the frame of the lift forks with a ratchet binder. "I drive over to the wood chute, tilt the box and the wood slides down the chute into the basement, slick as

can be. It's an efficient way to handle the 36 pallets of wood that I use to heat our house every year," says Stevenson. "And it also lets my mind work better because I'm not tired."

Stevenson says his pallet boxes are reusable because he stacks them off the ground while the wood inside them is curing. "I learned early on I can't stack full pallets on the ground because the base of the pallet wood rots quickly. I set the full boxes onto regular pallets and that keeps them away from wet soil and leaves." He also covers the pallet boxes with canvas or rubber tarp and lets mother nature cure the split wood with natural aeration.

"It's a simple and inexpensive system, one that gives me a little exercise, but saves my back," he adds.

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"Field Master rotary rakes and hay tedders are well-built, with durable gearboxes and easy-to-get parts," says Nelson Horning, Finger Lakes Equipment.



Heavy-Duty Rakes, Tedders Built To Last

FARM SHOW subscriber David Horst says Field Master rotary rakes and hay tedders are built heavier and stronger than anything else on the market. That was Nelson Horning's goal when he bought the brand some years ago for Finger Lakes Equipment.

"Field Master equipment is well-built with durable gearboxes and easy-to-get parts," says Horning. "We made some changes in the basic design, reinforcing some areas we felt needed it and reducing weight in others. The end result was re-engineered designs that work better and last longer."

With nearly 30 years in the hay equipment business, Horning had a good idea what was needed. As a result, the Field Master tedder fluffs hay more gently without spreading it out, as other rotary tedders tend to do.

"The hay may not dry as fast, but stems hold on to leaves better, and the leaves retain more color," says Horning. "It may not fit all conditions, but it is a better fit for many."

The 9-ft. wide hay tedder is priced at \$8,700. The single rotary rake is priced at \$9,200. A double rotary is priced at \$29,500. Horning acknowledges the price

is a significant increase, but points to value received in the way it follows the contour better than competitive double rotaries and adjusts for single or double swaths.

"The 2 rakes are connected by a ball hitch that allows each to follow its own contour," he says. "That really helps when you are going over a knob or hill. Walking beam axles on both rake models and the tedder also help ensure the tines follow the field surface closely."

Initially Horning moved manufacturing to a company in Ontario, assembling it at his Finger Lakes Equipment facility in Penn Yan, N.Y. Later he turned assembly over as well. He now handles distribution for the hay tedder and rakes in the eastern U.S. He is also continuing to look for new ways to improve the design.

"We are testing a triple wide hay tedder," says Horning. "With a 24-ft. working width, it could handle three 10 to 13-ft. windrows."

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