Plastic Tile Pto Shield

After reading an article about a 13-year-old boy hurt in a pto shaft accident, Harold Fratzke, Cottonwood, Minn., came up with an easy, low-cost way to shield pto's.

"Slipping a length of 4-in. plastic field tile over unshielded pto's works excellent. It's virtually impossible to get caught on a 4-in. round tube even if it's turning. To install, simply pull the pto shaft apart and slip on the tile. It costs only about 25 cents a foot so you can have excellent pto protection for only about $1.25," says Fratzke.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Harold Fratzke, 234 Shoreview Drive, Cottonwood, Minn. 56229.

Side Dress Nitrogen With Cultivator

"I've used this rig for the past three years. It works great and has really increased my corn yields," says John B. Adair, Loysville, Penn., who mounted Oliver fertilizer boxes on his IHC cultivator to side dress corn with 46-0-0 nitrogen fetilizer.

The Oliver boxes hold 500 lbs. fertilizer. It's metered out by a low rpm motor driven by tractor hydraulics. A flow restrictor controls fertilizer discharge. "It's a relatively uncomplicated way to take care of two jobs at once," notes Adair.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John B. Adair, Rt. 1,Box 293A, Loysville, Penn. 17047 (ph 717 789-3408).

This Colorado Farmer Raises Blue Corn

The sight of golden kernels of corn no longer has the same impact on the Nate Cranson farm east of La Junta, Colorado. What catches the most attention nowadays is blue corn.

Cranson grows and markets the specialty corn crop and, after seven years, he is convinced that the popularity of blue corn, used for tortillas and corn chips, is growing. "It has a better flavor than regular corn. Blue corn seems lighter and less filling. Chips and tortillas made with it have a dark, bluish appearance," he says.

Growing up on his father's farm, the 35-year-old knew the ins and outs of growing traditional crops like alfalfa, corn and wheat. One day a friend of the family showed him an ear of blue corn she had gotten from an Indian reservation. The heavy ears were filled with bluish-black kernels that were a staple in the diet of the Indians of the American Southwest for centuries and held special ceremonial significance.

"We planted our first blue corn from that one ear, and kept it in our garden for a couple years," Cranson says. "I heard of another grower in the San Luis Valley who was producing blue corn, and I called him to see if there was a market." That grower told Cranson he would purchase his blue corn, and Cranson went into the crop commercially.

Year to year, Cranson completes a marketing plan and plants according to his predictions. His acreage ranges from a few acres to as many as 60.

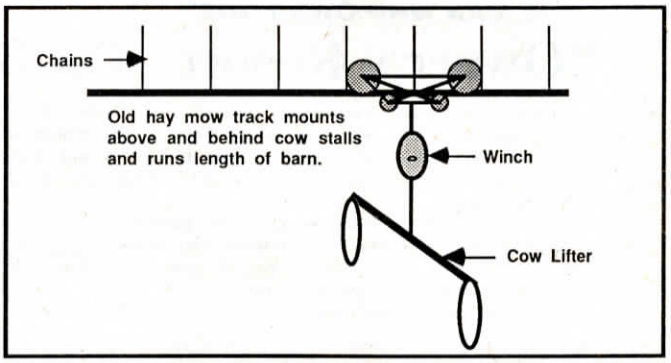
Blue corn was a good choice for an alternate crop because Cranson was already equipped to grow corn. Production costs are similar to field corn and he grows his own seed since the variety is open-pollinated rather than hybridized. One disadvantage is a lack of stalk strength that often leads to 30 to 40% field losses in high winds or bad weather. Another is that yields are quite a bit lower at 30 to 55 bu. per acre. However, market prices are 3 or 4 times higher, depending on the year. Cranson thinks the crop will gow nearly anywhere in the U.S. He has a 120-day growing season in Colorado but says his blue corn crop matures much earlier than that.

Marketing is difficult and Cranson builds his own customer relationships to assure sales of the product. Most come from referrals and word-of-mouth. Each sale is negotiated individually with customers, says Cranson. "It's tough to find dependable markets."

Cranson recommends that a grower of any specialty crop like blue corn not devote too much acreage - about 10% of the total is a good average. "Start easy into a crop, and if it looks good, increase your input in dollars or time," he advises.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Nate Cranson, 30934 E. Highway 194, La Junta, Colo. 81050 (ph 303 384-7929).

Reprinted courtesy the Colorado Department of Agriculture.



"Therapy Track" Helps Down Cows Recuperate

A Wisconsin dairyman says the "therapy track" he designed for his dairy barn helps down cows regain strength after a bout with milk fever or calf paralysis.

Jim D. Hansen, who farms near Bloomer, suspended an old hay mow track and carrier by chains just above and behind the cow stalls in his barn. When a cow goes down, he suspends her from the track using "hip lifters" and a winch so she can gradually get her strength back by pulling herself along the track down the length of the barn.

"It works best if you hang the hay mow track from chains so it can swing slightly to compensate for a cow's gait. This will also help keep the carrier on track regardless of the angle of stress," says Hansen.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jim D. Hansen, Rt. 3, Box 122, Bloomer, Wis. 54724.

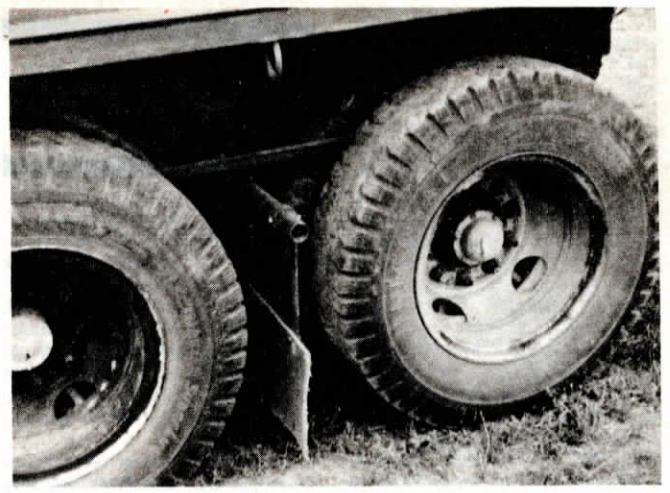
Dead Calf "Jacket" Fools Mother Cow

You can trick a mother cow that's lost its calf into adopting an orphan calf by skinning the dead calf and putting the hide over the back of the orphan, according to a report in GRAINEWS, published in Winnipeg, Canada.

It's an old trick, according to the magazine, but one that nearly always works.

It works best if the calf is skinned while still fresh. Legs should be skinned so that the "jacket" can be slipped right onto the replacement calf, putting the live calf's legs through the leg holes to hold the jacket in place. The tail of the calf should also be left attached.

Most cows are convinced after their first smell of the jacketed calf. Once the calf has nursed a few times, a bond forms between the two and you can usually remove the skin.



Flaps Help Stop Flats

"I was getting one flat after another and almost always it was the inside dual on the rear axle. I haven't had a single flat since I solved the problem with these flaps that fit between the axles," says Willie Fichtenberg, Mesa, Wash.

"The flaps keep the first set of duals from kicking up nails, screws and other sharp objects into the path of the rear duals," he points out.

A 1 1/4-in. pipe bolted to the truck frame extends between the axles. From the pipe, hangs the 10-in. tall, 24-in. wide flap made from old conveyor belting on a strap iron framework. The flap is held rigid so it doesn't bang into the tires. Since the truck's rear axle is belt-driven off the drive axle, he notched the flap for the belt to run through.

Fichtenberg notes that the flaps weigh about 20 lbs. each and ride about 1-in. above the road. He cautions that the flaps will catch trash and mud and thus would probably have to be removed to drive through the field.

Fichtenberg notes that the two flaps add about 20 lbs. to the truck but that the advantages outweigh the extra weight.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Willie Fichtenberg, 4452 Ironwood Rd., Mesa, Wash. 99343 (ph 509 266-4392).