

Dairyman Built His Own Rotary Parlor

John Reitsma is taking his cows for a ride, and they like it. His milking crews like it, too, because it's a quiet ride. Reitsma says his new rotary parlor is so quiet that it's almost eerie.

"There are no clanging gates," he explains. "From the time the cow gets on until she gets off, there are solid rails around her with nothing to open or close."

Rotary parlors are gaining in popularity as dairymen discover benefits that go beyond noise reduction. Reitsma built his after touring large dairies in Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. He reports that the rotary parlor is more efficient to operate than his two state-of-the-art double-20 herringbone parlors which are just four years old. What's more, the new rotary cost less to build on a per stall basis but will handle significantly more animals per hour.

"With each of the herringbones, we milk 2800 cows, three times a day with four people. Each milking takes about seven hours," he says. "The rotary parlor milks

3,100 cows three times a day with five guys and we expect to get it up to 4,000 cows per 8-hour shift."

Reitsma's rotary parlor sits in a building 120 ft. wide and 350 ft. long. The wheel is 100 ft. in diameter and fitted with 80 stalls. It makes one revolution every 7 minutes.

Three electric motors power the platform, though only one is actually necessary. The dairyman says there are actually fewer moving parts than in a more traditional parlor so regular maintenance is minimal.

The platform rolls on large, hard plastic wheels. With no pressure points and with a solid surface underneath and above, the wheels are expected to last forever, suggests Reitsma.

The building also contains two 600 cow holding pens, one for washing and the other a drip bin. Cows learn to step out of the drip bin onto the rotating platform where two members of the milking crew attach milkers. At the end of the ride, two more workers prepare cows to move off the platform.

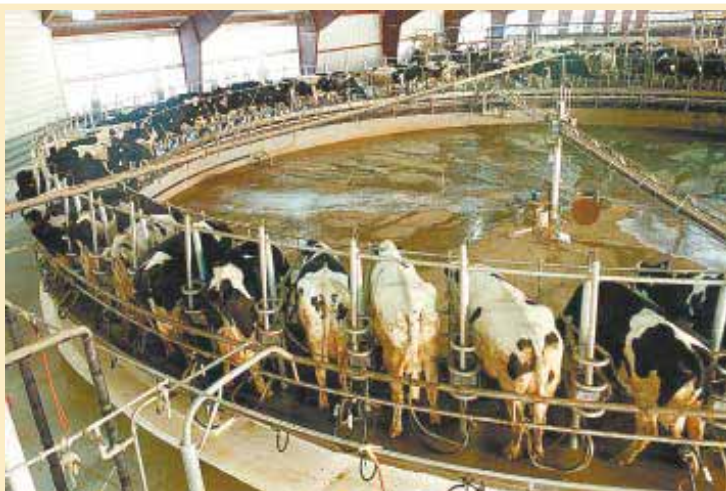


Photo courtesy The Capital Press

John Reitsma built this rotary parlor for its economical cost and efficient use of labor. His cows adapted well to it. Younger cows quickly learned to climb on the moving platform. However, older cows are slower to adapt.

Rotaries have been built to hold as many as 120 stalls, and a friend of Reitsma's built one that held only 20 stalls. The limiting factor is labor, he says. A rotary parlor requires a minimum of one person on the front end and one on the back end.

"You need enough to keep two guys busy," says Reitsma. "Once the thing runs smooth, it's incredible."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John Reitsma, 75 N. 400 W, Jerome, Idaho 83338 (ph 208 324-4536).



Butch Uhnken turned an Owatonna hydrostatic-drive swather into this big self-propelled mower with a 10-ft. Woods cutting deck.



The mower deck is 2-point mounted to the swather.

Big Mower Built From Owatonna Swather

By C.F. Marley

Butch Uhnken of Jacksonville, Ill., is one of the most talented farmer-inventors in the country. He builds at least one new machine every winter, many of which have appeared in FARM SHOW.

This year he decided to turn an Owatonna hydrostatic-drive swather into a big self-propelled mower with a 10-ft. Woods cutting deck. He got the basic idea from reading about Minnesota farmer Jules Jacobson, fea-

tured in FARM SHOW's Vol. 22, No. 4.

Like Jacobson, Uhnken started with an Owatonna swather but made his own design changes that he thinks work better.

First, he lowered the frame by 7 in., front and back. Then he narrowed the drive axle width by 14 in. He narrowed up rear wheel spacing by 3 ft. so he could get around poles while mowing ditches.

He also modified the clutch on the ma-

chine, using air power to shift instead of hydraulics. He did it using a Ford upright air conditioner pump. It provides from 75 to 125 lbs. of air pressure. Uhnken also uses air pressure to turn the mower on and off because he did not want the clutch to engage too fast. He had to fit the mower with an air tank.

Uhnken also installed a new pto drive to get it down to the level of the mower. He

installed two pulleys with the drive pulley at the top turning at the engine speed of 2,800 rpm's. The driven pulley turns the pto at 1,000 rpm's.

The 10-ft. wide Woods mower deck is 2-point mounted to the swather.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, B.L. "Butch" Uhnken, 25 Westfair, Jacksonville, Ill. (ph 217-245-4359 or 217-472-3851).

Another "Owatonna" Mower

Since FARM SHOW featured a mower built by Jules Jacobson out of an Owatonna swather in our Vol. 22, No. 4 issue, many readers have taken the same route and built their own farmstead mowers. Tim Nelson, Carlinville, Ill., liked the idea so much he contacted Jacobson and used the same design to build what he calls his "Supermower". He even put a Superman-type logo on the front.

The mower consists of a 6-ft. Befco mower deck that's "pushed" by the Owatonna swather's power unit. The Befco mower is ideal for the conversion because it has a gearbox that can be driven either direction by the pto. So it adapts well to being pushed.

Jacobson has plans for sale. He says hundreds of farmers have contacted him about building their own self-propelled mowers. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jules Jacobson, P.O. Box 53, Porter, Minn. 56280 (ph 507 296-4514).

