Low-cost shed was made by placing two bin halves side by side on ground and using steel posts to keep the sides from spreading out.

They Save Money By Cutting Up Old Grain Bins

"We're always looking to re-use things. One of our neighbors says that watching us operate is a little like watching the old Sanford & Sons TV show," says Terry Hill, Battle Creek, Mich., who recently sent FARM SHOW photos of some low-cost buildings he made out of 14-ft. dia., 1,000-bu. grain bins.

To convert a bin, Hill uses a torch to cut the roof off, then cuts the bin in half vertically starting at the door. Sometimes he places the two halves side by side directly on the ground, overlapping them a little, and uses steel posts to keep the sides from spreading out. These 16-ft. long, 6-ft. high open-ended structures work great for storing lumber.

Last fall he needed some hay storage for his registered Jersey heifers so he converted a bin into a hay shelter that he put next to his cattle pen. A series of 6-ft. sq. pallets line two sides of the shelter. The pallets are lag screwed together and are also lag screwed to the bin walls and to treated wood that sits on the ground. The shelter holds about 110 small square bales.

Another project involved mounting the roof from one bin over an old gravity box. The gravity box holds up to 125 bu. of ground corn cobs that the Hills use as bedding for their chickens and hogs. The bin roof's fill cap is removed, and a grinder-mixer equipped with a 1-in. screen augers cobs into the gravity box.

A series of 6-ft. sq. pallets were lag screwed onto bin walls to make this hay shelter.

"We buy bins from neighbors. Most people are glad just to get rid of them so we usually get them free. The most we've ever paid for a bin was $100. Putting up buildings this way takes a lot more time because we have to pull nails and sometimes have to engineer things. The bins are a little hard to handle when they're cut in two because they tend to twist around until you get them tipped up and in place."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Terry Hill, 4439 Capitol Ave. S.W., Battle Creek, Mich. 49015 (ph 616 979-9492; fax 616 979-8102).

Self-Propelled Sickle Bar Mower

Ralph Scofield, Penn Yan, N.Y., was in the salvage yard business for many years. So when the 82-year-old rural resident set out to build a self-propelled sickle mower, he had no problem finding the parts he needed and combining them into a nifty dual-wheeled rig.

The mower is fitted with a 5-ft. sickle bar mower with multiple height adjustments and an upright lock position.

Scofield used multiple car parts, an 8-hp. Wisconsin engine with 12-volt electric start, and a frame made out of 4-in. channel iron. Power from the engine makes its way through two Chevrolet tranmissions, putting power back to a Ford rear-end. The tractor has 10 speeds forward and 3 speeds in reverse with turn brakes for stopping.

The low center of gravity and wide stance gives the tractor a solid base for mowing hillsides and ditches. The rear axle is fitted with 20-in. dual rear wheels.

Scofield's friend Doc Castner did the welding. Lathe work linking the transmissions and rear-end was done by Louie Wild. Scofield says he was the supervisor.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ralph Scofield, 1 Widow Hill Rd., Pen Yan, N.Y. 14527 (ph 315 536-2023).

Scofield used multiple car parts to build his own self-propelled sickle bar mower.

Tractor's low center of gravity and wide stance help when mowing hillsides and ditches.

"Cow Balls" Keep Stock Tanks From Freezing, Reduce Evaporation

Tired of chopping ice out of stock tanks? Ron Baker, Alva, Oklahoma, has an idea that might help. He calls his invention "Cow Balls."

These 4-in. dia. black plastic balls float on the water in the tank. The sun heats them up so that they insulate water in the tank to prevent ice from forming except in extreme cold weather. If ice does form, it doesn't take much sunshine to rewarm and loosen the balls.

"Thirsty cows looking for water can usually break through by pushing on the balls with their noses," says Baker.

You have to use enough Cow Balls to cover the tank. "When people order them, we get the dimensions of the tank where they'll use them," he says. "We provide enough balls to cover the surface."

Baker says Cow Balls are meant to remain on the tank year-round. In the summer, the balls reduce evaporation, helping to conserve water. They also help keep algae growth down by limiting the amount of sunlight that enters the water.

Baker admits he hasn't tested Cow Balls in far northern states where winter is longer and colder. "I think they would work well in heated tanks, though," he says. He suggests the layer of insulation they provide might actually help reduce heater fuel use.

Baker says the balls should last indefinitely, since they're made of heavy plastic and treated to be ultraviolet resistant. You just dump the balls into the tank and then set the water level so less than half the ball floats above the tank rim. "If more than half the ball is above the rim, the cows can knock them out when they drink or the wind can actually blow them out," he says. He also recommends that overflow holes be cut in the tanks, so heavy rains or a malfunctioning flow valve can't float them off the top.

"Cow balls" are 4-in. dia. black plastic balls that float on water in tank. The sun heats them up so they insulate water in tank to prevent ice from forming.

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"It lets me easily make repairs to the header in the raised position so I don't have to lay down under it," says Kaderabek.

Trailer Tips Combine Head Up

Joseph Kaderabek, Ohiowa, Neb., recently sent FARM SHOW photos of a transport trailer that he designed to tilt his combine header up for easy maintenance and more compact storage.

"I built it for my Deere 653 6-row crop header. It lets me easily make repairs in the raised position so I don't have to lay down under it," says Kaderabek. "Tilting the header also saves storage space inside my shed."

The 4-wheel patent pending trailer consists of a cradle that bolts to the header and is then tipped up by a pair of 3 by 16-in. hydraulic cylinders. The cylinders are retracted so that a scissor frame tilts the header up to about a 70-degree angle. A pair of lock blocks are then used to hold the header securely in place.

"I recently used it to put a new floor under my header and it made the job a lot easier," says Kaderabek.

"I built it out of a used heavy duty wagon running gear that I bought from a neighbor. I spent about $2,000 on materials. I got the idea when a local farmer was killed a few years ago after he bought a new combine and was working on the corn head when it fell on him. I thought there had to be a safer way. The trailer could be made to fit any header."

The 4-wheel trailer consists of a cradle that bolts to header and is then tipped up by a pair of 3 by 16-in. hydraulic cylinders.

Kaderabek is looking for a manufacturer.

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