Move Twice The Hay With 2-Bale Hauler

This rear-mounted Hay Handler lets you haul two bales at once, saving time and fuel. Independent hydraulic cylinders on each side let you pick up and drop bales one at a time.

"I built the first one for myself, mounting the forks on an old plow frame," says Ricky Thomas, a cattleman and custom baler. "A welder wanted to build one on a new frame, and we decided to offer them for sale."

He notes that adding a loader-mounted bale spear on a tractor equipped with his twin unit would let an operator pick up and move three bales at once. The 10-ft. wide, 950-lb. Hay Handler can be equipped with either spears or twin forks. It can also be equipped with a quick hitch attachment that fits either a Cat. 2 or Cat. 3, 3-pt. hitch.

Hay Handler can be fitted with either bale spears or twin forks.

"The reason I built it was to handle more hay with fewer trips," says Thomas. "I always thought bigger tractors should be able to haul two bales. An 80 hp tractor or larger can handle two big bales, and smaller tractors can handle two 4-ft. bales with the Hay Handler"

One thing that concerned Thomas when designing the Hay Handler was durability. Some rear-mounted bale carriers can't handle the full force of the tractor backing into a row of bales.

"My Hay Handler will hold a 150 hp tractor in place when backed into other bales to unload," say Thomas. "It makes the tractor wheels spin, but the Hay Handler is fine."

Current inventory of the Hay Handler is retailing for $1,650 with forks and $2,050 with spears. "I expect I will have to raise prices once these are gone, due to higher materials costs," says Thomas, who is looking for dealers to handle the unit.

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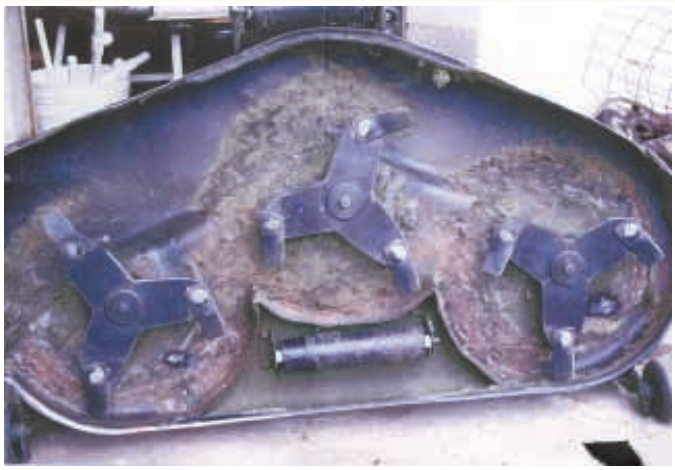
Independent hydraulic cylinders on each side of the Hay Handler let you pick up and drop bales one at a time.



To save money on the cost of new replacement blades, Walter Murray came up with cutting discs fitted with three swivel-mounted blades.

Swivel-Mounted Mower Blades

Walter Murray replaced the blades on his 30-year-old Deere 214 47-in. riding mower with cutting discs fitted with three swivel-mounted blades.

He came up with the new design to save money on the cost of new replacement blades.

"With conventional single blades, when the blade wears out you have to replace the whole thing," says Murray. "With my design, I keep the disc and replace only the knives, which should last many times as long as conventional blades. I'll probably wear out the mower's engine or the wheels will fall off before I ever have to replace the blades."

In addition, Murray says his cutting discs mow faster and cut cleaner using less power. "They chop up grass real fine, even when it's wet," he says.

He used a sabre saw to cut three triangle shaped pieces out of 1/4-in. thick boiler plate. He drilled a hole in the center of each triangle and also at the end of each point to bolt the blades on.

"More cutting edges results in a better job of cutting. And the blades are so thin they hardly ever have to be sharpened," says Murray. "I came up with the idea last spring after I already had the deck off for minor repairs. The mower is about 30 years old and the blades and bushings were worn out. Rather than spend about $50 for new ones, I decided to try something different.

"I bought the 1/8-in. thick, 4-in. long disc mower blades at Tractor Supply Company. I bought the smallest and cheapest disc blades I could find because I didn't know if this idea would work. Both the blades and bolts came six to a box, so I had to buy two boxes of each at a total cost of $27. The bolts were actually more expensive than the blades. Now I have three blades and three bolts left over for replacement purposes."

Only the knives will ever have to be replaced, unlike conventional single blades where you have to replace the whole thing, notes Murray.

The blades on disc mowers operate at very high rpm's, so Murray says his blades would probably work even better if his mower had enough power to rotate the blades faster.

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"It lets me drive through the field without knocking down any of the crop," says Terry Kuchera about his high clearance "field checker".

High Clearance "Field Checker"

"I use it to 'walk' my corn and soybean fields and to haul repair parts for my center pivot irrigators. It lets me drive out in the field without knocking down any of the crop," says Terry Kuchera, Bassett, Neb., about the hydrostatic drive, high clearance "field checker" he built.

The 3-wheeled machine carries Kuchera about 8 ft. off the ground. It has a single lug-type drive wheel on front that came off an old pivot tower. The rear wheels are off a Ford Escort and are spaced 10 ft. apart to span four 30-in. rows. The frame was made from 1 1/2 by 3-in. sq. tubing. Power is supplied by the Escort's 4-cyl. engine which mounts on a frame 8 ft. above the ground, between the two rear wheels. The engine belt-drives a 25-gal. hydraulic pump, which powers an orbit motor that chain-drives the front wheel.

The driver's seat rides up or down on a steel column above the front wheel, powered by an electric winch that operates off the engine's battery. All controls mount on the seat, including the ignition key, a toggle switch to raise the seat up and down, a control valve to drive the machine forward or backward, the steering wheel, and throttle.

A hand-operated winch is used to lift up spare parts like gearboxes, jacks, etc. They hang from the back of the rig's frame by a cable or chain. There's a toolbox located under the oil tank. A triangle-shaped steel gas tank is located above one of the rear wheels, while the hydraulic oil tank mounts ahead of the engine.

"It's really easy to operate. I just get in the seat at ground level and winch myself up," says Kuchera. "The machine draws a lot of interest. When I drove it in a local parade last fall, a lot of people came up to me and wanted to know what it was.

"The wheels are narrow enough that I can turn around in the middle of the field and do very little damage. In early growth soybeans I can go across the rows and in 30 days you can hardly even tell where I drove."

Kuchera says his machine won't go just anywhere. For example, it won't go in mud or over deep pivot tracks. "The main limitation is that the front wheel spins in the mud, but usually I can push it out by hand after I get off," he says.

Kuchera says he originally planned to use a 20 hp Briggs and Stratton engine to operate the pump, but it would have cost about $1,000 so instead he used the Escort engine. "I thought I'd have way more power than I needed, but I was surprised to find that the machine has just enough power," he says.

If he built another one Kuchera says he would make it direct-drive instead of hydrostatic drive, to lower the cost. "I paid $750 for the hydrostatic components and bought new steel for the frame. My total cost was still less than $2,000," he notes.

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Driver's seat moves up and down column above the front wheel, powered by an electric winch that operates off the engine's battery.