Oversize Skid Steer Wheels Speed Up Loader Work

"Our new oversize wheels and 8-ft. bucket let a skid steer do the work of a much larger tractor," says Sylvan Yoder, Beaver Fence LLC, McVeytown, Penn.

Yoder's company does general contractor work involving a lot of digging and hauling. They decided to put big wheels on their Case 95XT skid loader to speed it up.

The idea worked so well they put together what they call a "Speedo kit" that includes specially built oversized wheel rims for 17.5L24 (24-in. high) backhoe tires, and a big 96-in. ripper bucket.

The tall wheels raise the skid loader 8 in. higher off the ground, which would have prevented the loader's hydraulic cylinders from lowering a conventional bucket all the way to the ground. So they built the oversized bucket, which is equipped with heavy duty teeth on front.

"We've used the wheels and bucket for six years, and it has really stepped up our production. It works so well that we recently started building the kit for other people," says Yoder.

"With the transmission in high range the loader can go 18 mph, which compares to about 10 mph with conventional wheels. It makes a big difference on some jobs. For example, when you're building fence and going back and forth all the time to get a new bundle of posts. The faster speed also comes in handy when moving snow.

Sylvan Yoder mounted big 24-in. high wheels on this Case 95XT skid loader to speed it up. "With the transmission in high range the loader can go 18 mph, which compares to about 10 mph with conventional wheels," he says.

"The big wheels have a lot more traction in mud and snow. To install the bigger wheels you need a skid loader with a minimum wheelbase of 51 in. from center to center, which includes the Gehl Mustang and the Case 95XT."

The Speedo kit sells for $6,200.

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Trap Eliminated My Backyard Moles

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

The EasySet Mole Eliminator Trap does the near impossible. It actually kills moles, time after time. In fact, I went from no hits in mole control to four - for - four with the new trap.

"I have yet to have an unsatisfied customer," says Bob Bruno, distributor of the trap. "I had one woman tell me she had never found a trap yet that worked. I told her to take one and try it. If it didn't work, send it back. Instead, she sent me a check for four more for friends."

Like that customer, I had never met a trap or bait that did the job, not that it's an easy job to do. Moles are fast, moving 80 ft./min. in an existing tunnel. Researchers say they can dig new tunnels at the rate of 18 ft. per hour or as much as 150 ft. per day.

When Bruno showed me the $34.95 trap at a farm show, I was skeptical. I did like the money-back guarantee, something my local hardware store wasn't about to give me on their traps.

My first few tries were dismal failures. I called Bob, and he gave me a few pointers. One suggestion was stepping down only on the portion of the tunnel where the trap would go. If the soil was too sandy, flatten a pop can and put that under the trigger to give it more surface area. Most important was to make sure the trigger mechanism was directly over the tunnel. Because what happens is that when the mole comes back to open the collapsed tunnel, he pushes upward, triggering the trap.

Other smarter mole trappers would have instinctively known these things but I was happy to have Bob's advice.

I headed back to the yard, carefully stepped down only a section of a main tunnel that would be under the trap trigger. Then I centered the trap, which looks like two scissors inside a steel frame. I stepped down on the footrest, checking the trigger mechanism as it went down to be sure it rested directly over the flattened tunnel.

The next morning I checked the trap and it had been triggered. I had my mole. A few days later, another mole entered the area. He too made a one-way trip to the nearby woods. A few days later, a third mole met his fate. My fourth and last mole - so far - showed up one afternoon and began digging tunnels. The next morning I set my trap, and within four hours that mole, too, was history.

Photo above shows trap in the "set" position. Trap is set by stepping on it until trigger pushes down onto tunnel. Photo at right shows trap after it's been "sprung".

The one problem I found was that in very soft sod, the framework of the trap sunk down below ground as I set it with my foot. In that case, I carefully withdrew the trap a couple of inches to ground level.

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Researchers Steve McComas and Jo Stuckert have had success controlling algae in small lakes and ponds by dumping ordinary corn meal into the water.

They Used Corn Meal To Clean Up Lakes

For years, farmers have been using bales of barley straw in farm ponds to clean up algae. Now, some researchers are getting the same results by dumping ordinary corn meal into the water.

Steve McComas, an aquatic scientist with Blue Water Research in St. Paul, Minn., is piloting a new program using corn meal. Last summer he and co-worker Jo Stuckert tested corn meal on three south suburban Minneapolis lakes. The lakes measured 114, 14, and 10 acres in size.

The large size of Lake Alimagnet made using barley impractical. With barley the bales have to be staked in, whereas with corn meal all you do is toss it over the side of a boat.

McComas got the idea to use corn meal from his father-in-law in Texas, who said that he had heard about lakes and ponds in the South using it. "As it turns out, corn meal is a better organic carbon source than barley."

Researchers say the corn meal competes with the algae for available phosphorus and will, in effect, starve much of the algae to death. That's because the microbes that break down the corn meal also consume phosphorus, which is needed by algae. As the corn meal decomposes the bacteria is released, which out competes with algae for the phosphorous in the water.

Corn meal competes with algae for available phosphorus and will starve much of the algae to death, say researchers.

McComas found the two smallest lakes showed the greatest improvement in water quality. He suspected there were too many fish in the big lake so he set nets to monitor the fish population. He found hundreds more bullhead and bluegill fish than the lake could sustain.

"The results to this point are encouraging," says McComas. "There weren't dramatic improvements in a lake of 114 acres, but this lake is the largest it's ever been attempted on. The results in the smallest 10-acre lake were dramatic. I think we want another season before saying we should all switch to this. So far, it's promising."

Carson drags a tire behind his tractor and pulls it around fields to make snow ridges. In a few days, the snow ridges harden and the valleys fill up with snow.

Tires Make Great Snow Trapping System

With recent summer droughts and declining snowfalls during the winter, John Carson wants to trap all the snow he can in his fields.

To do so, the Sherwood Park, Alberta, man found a new use for tractor tires. "I got an old tractor tire, hooked it by a chain to my tractor and pulled it around the fields," he says, adding that in a few days, the snow ridges harden and the valleys fill up when it snows again. This increases the amount of snow in his fields by two or three times. "It's a great job for a cold winter day, " he jokes.

In the spring, the ridges also act as barriers to runoff, forcing the water to soak into the soil. Carson also says that his alfalfa had less winter kill.

If he had larger fields, he'd attach more tires to a drawbar and pull them all at once.

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