Kit Makes It Easy To Convert Ford N-Series To V-8 Power

After installing flathead V-8 engines in place of the original 4-cylinder motors in 26 8N Fords, the conversion is now a snap for Don Knasel. And thanks to the conversion kit he recently developed, it's also a snap for just about anybody else.

"Most anybody capable of changing oil or spark plugs can switch engines with the kit in about 8 to 10 hours," says Knasel. "It can be used to convert any N-Series Ford tractor."

Knasel calls his kit the Awesome Henry V-8 Ford Conversion Kit in honor of Henry Ford. He figures Ford would appreciate its simplicity and ease. Each kit is handcrafted and bears its own metal nameplate and registration number. The kit itself costs $995 and contains all the hardware needed to connect the V-8 engine and clutch assembly to the 8N transmission and frame.

"Just disassemble and remove the stock 4-banger, bolt in the conversion kit and slide the flathead V-8 into place," says Knasel. "No special tools are needed. The conversion kit uses the clutch, pressure plate and flywheel found on the flathead V-8. We haven't even had to adjust the clutch; they just slide in."

What isn't included in the kit is a smaller 4 3/4-gal. fuel tank available for $145. It's needed to make room for the carburetor on the flathead. Also needed is a new header-type manifold that drops out of both sides. With brackets and bolts, it adds another $225 to the cost. A tank conversion needed to change the 8N radiator to a V-8 adds another $95.

"A lot of guys will use their own tanks or manifolds, so we don't include them in the conversion kit," notes Knasel.

Before retiring from the collision and used car business, Knasel and his son Dave had collected around 100 mostly N-Series tractors. He is now down to 25 that he is keeping for his collection and another 10-12 he may convert to flatheads.

"It's a question of do you want to overhaul a 4-cylinder that may be a little tired or replace it with a V-8," says Knasel, "Nothing sounds better than those little flatheads."

Kit costs $995 and contains all the hardware needed to connect the V-8 engine and clutch assembly to the Ford 8N transmission and frame. Knasel says it takes about 8 to 10 hours to install.

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New Products For Horse and Rider

State-Of-The-Art Boots

Latest new boots for horses use materials and technology previously only found on modern ice skates and snowboard boots. They provide protection for all types of riding, and can replace traditional metal horseshoes. Boots can also be used on "barefoot" horses to treat injuries. They can even be used to provide protection during trailering, breeding, and are a quick fix for the occasional lost shoe.

The "Boa Boot" lace-tightening mechanism only recently came onto the market for human applications but it was quickly adapted for horses.

The unique closure system uses a dial tightening mechanism with a steel cable and reel. By simply turning the dial, one can easily and evenly tighten or loosen the cable, by small increments if desired. "Because of the mechanical advantage created by the reel's gear train, it develops significant leverage so a great deal of tensioning force is created with very little effort. As a result, the boot can be tensioned very tightly for increased support," the company website says.

The boot has a leather upper and urethane sole. It also has a pull-tab at the heel, similar to those found on athletic tennis shoes. This, combined with the easily-controlled lace system, makes it easy to put on or take off these boots.

Three small drain holes in the sole of the boot allow moisture to escape. Boots can be used on either foot. Hard metal boot studs are available for ice and snow or extra traction on steep slopes. They cost $18 for a set of 12 studs.

Another accessory, the Boa Gaiter, is recommended for sandy or muddy conditions. It helps keep excessive sand and dirt out of the boot. It can also be used on horses that have a tendency to chafe.

The Boa Boot sells for $135 per pair with free shipping to the lower 48 states. The Boa Gaiters are $15.75 per pair.

Grazing Muzzle

The Best Friend Grazing Muzzle can be used to put a horse on a diet or to discourage bad habits such as nipping and cribbing.

The safe and comfortable muzzle has a small opening in the bottom that allows horses to eat a limited amount of grass, but drink unlimited water. In this way, they can remain in the herd, exercising and socializing in the pasture.

Lightweight and strong, the muzzle resists rubbing and chafing, and will not rot. It's made of soft, comfortable nylon webbing with neoprene padding on the noseband. The bottom is made of flexible and durable reinforced rubber, which is easily cleaned with water.

The Best Friends Muzzle comes in five sizes: large horse, horse, cob, pony and mini. It's priced at $55.95.

Mounting Aide

The Best Friend Bare-up is a bareback mounting aide that fits around the horse's barrel, just behind the withers. It allows the rider to easily mount for bareback riding.

"Extra wide cotton webbing spreads the weight of your mounting over a broad area around the horse's girth, minimizing the load," the company explains. "It only takes a minute to strap it on, mount up, and then take it off while you're riding, stored in the included waist pack."

The Best Friend Bare-up fits horses with girths up to 70 inches and is available in either hunter green or navy blue. Its stainless steel stirrup will not rust. It's priced at $31.95.

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John Slywczak used beams from a 52-ft. trailer to make a bridge that crosses a stream on his farm.

Trailer Beams Bridge Stream

Driving through a stream on his farm was causing it to wash out so John Slywczak decided it was time to build a bridge. He needed 50-ft. beams and decided he could get what he needed from trailers used to haul pre-built homes to building sites. They're basically beams with axles under them.

"A dealer wanted $700 to $800 for a transport unit," says Slywczak. "The 52-ft. trailer had 6 axles under the four I-beams, which I stripped and sold to recover most of what I paid for the package."

Once the beams were on site, Slywczak stripped off any extraneous brackets and supports. Each I-beam was double width for reinforcement at axle mounts. He flipped two I-beams end for end and then boxed alternating pairs so the reinforced sections offset each other rather than face each other. Box ends were made by cutting 27-in. sections from each I-beam and welding to the ends of each pair. The ends of the two pairs were then reinforced with 8-ft. lengths of 1 1/2 by 2-in. steel tubing welded in place. Spacing the two pairs of boxed I-beams 27 in. apart produced the desired overall width of 8 feet.

Slywczak knew he needed to reinforce the beams and create a camber or arch to the structure for added strength under load. The first step was to weld two lengths of 1 1/2 by 2-in. steel tubing in an X every four feet between the beams.

To create the camber, Slywczak attached a 1/4 by 2-in. belly band of cold rolled steel strap to the top of each beam running from points 9 ft. from either end. To secure the strap, he stitch welded it, welding for 6 in., leaving a gap and then welding for another 6 in. for the final 4 ft. of strap. Standoffs, made from 4-in. sections of 1 1/2 by 2-in. steel tubing welded to the top of the I-beams and between them and their belly straps, created the necessary tension. When the structure was flipped over, it had the desired curve. When placed under load, the belly straps help prevent sag.

Railroad tie footings, laid log cabin-style at each end of the bridge, provide solid support.

Footings at either end of the bridge consist of railroad ties laid log cabin-style from bedrock to above the creek bank. Ends of the ties were "pinned" with 1/2-in. rebar.

Lengths of wooden 2 by 2's were attached under the outside lips of the I-beams. Bridge decking of treated 2 by 4's were then attached to them using galvanized twist nails.

Railings were made by attaching 4 by 4 uprights to the beams using j-bolts. These were attached to the outside edge of the outside I-beams. Slywczak used 2 by 4's for the handrails.

Approaches were graded to the ties and covered with flat stone from the creek.

"It will swing sideways a little, but it has vertical stability," says Slywczak, who primarily crosses the bridge on his Cub Cadet. "When my son drove across it with a 2,000-lb. load, it only flexed 1/4 in. in the center."

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