

Farmer Tests New Farm Equipment

For every piece of farm equipment that hits the market, there should be a farmer somewhere who has tested it. For 11 manufacturers of dairy equipment all over the United States, the guinea pig is Ivan Grein of Brighton, Colorado.

Grein has been testing all types of equipment for more than 20 years, and the rewards have come in terms of a better, more productive dairy herd. He is one of a growing number of farmers who are testing the newest farm equipment, not for a paycheck, but for the plusses gained through having the most modern equipment available on his farm relatively free of charge.

As his herd of 85 Holstein cows go through the milking parlor, their production, temperature and other pertinent data is electronically metered and displayed on a computer board outside each of three inline stalls. Automatic take-offs remove the equipment and washers clean the equipment between cows. The computerized equipment is the latest in a series of 10 to 15 computer tools Grein has tested on-the-job, and a pile of cardboard boxes in storage beside the yellow-and-white milking parlor holds the next computer equipment to be tested.

"A piece of equipment that works great in the laboratory might not work too great in a barn where you get water, power surges and dirt," Grein says. "That's why they need me."

Grein helped a manufacturer develop a system to automatically feed his dairy cows. It was a good and relatively simple concept, but it took a producer to get the details down pat. For example, Grein finetuned the system so that it feeds a cow a little at a time until she completes her ration, so that if she leaves the feeder, no feed is wasted or miscalculated.

Inside the house, Grein taps away on the keyboard of a new computer provided by a company for him to evaluate and test dairy software. About \$4,000 in programs and a computer outweighed the time and frustration of learning to operate the machine and discovering and overcoming a problem in the program.

The equipment the dairyman tests is not all frills and fancy digital readouts though. The Head Acres Dairy barn is full of all types of test items, from rubber mats the milkers stand on to eartags on the cows and mastitis detectors. The smallest items — a base on the milk meter, inflations for milking, hoses — can all fail or succeed for the tiniest of reasons. Something as small as the shape or crimp on an eartag can cause problems on the market or the color of plastic near a sensor can cause a malfunction. Grein says it is his job to find those problems.

Testing equipment has its drawbacks, Grein says. Although the equipment he receives is usually in the final stages of development, he says it rarely works perfectly the first time. It normally takes several changes to make the equipment farm-



Grein notes that most equipment goes through many changes before it's "farm-proof".

proof. But he is under no obligation to keep using any equipment, and will take it out of operation if there are serious problems and replace it with other equipment to be tested.

He says very little extra time is required beyond the normal routine of work, but the testing requires patience.

Positive or negative, the manufacturing companies are anxious to hear the results of his testing, which ranges from quality testing where he might look over and use a batch of standard equipment, to product development where he works with the manufacturer to improve the design and make it work on-farm.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ivan Grein, 16616 E. 168th Ave., Brighton, CO 80601, (ph 303 659-0453).

Story and photo reprinted courtesy Colorado Department of Agriculture.

"Best Way" To Cut Tires

Ken Winans, Binghamton, New York, has come up with an easy, low-cost way to slice tires into strips using a saber or reciprocating saw.

"I've experimented a lot and have found that to best cut tires, you should simply sharpen and deepen each tooth on the serrated cutting edge of a saber saw blade and grind the tip to a sharp point. The point helps the blade poke through the tire," says Winans. "You'll really be amazed at how easily tires cut after regrounding the blade a little. Makes it easy to cut car, truck and tractor tires for feedbunks, fencing and other uses."

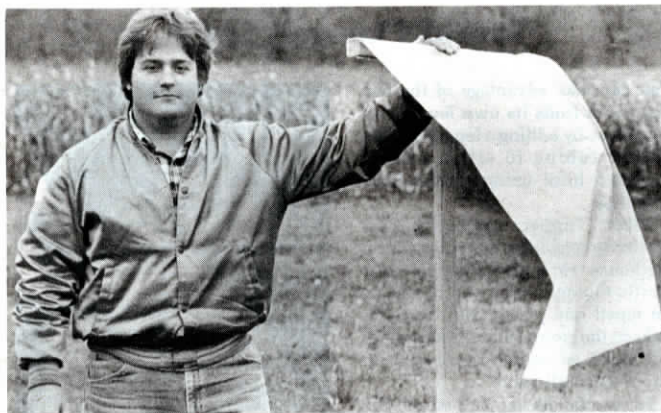


Photo courtesy, The Country Today

Flags' bright orange color, and movement in the wind, scare geese away.

Flags Help Keep Geese Out Of Fields

If you have problems with geese ravaging your fields, you may want to 'wave' them off with inexpensive orange flags built by Paul Sebo, of the Manitowoc County Soil and Water Conservation Dept., Manitowoc, Wis., who last fall worked with two area farmers with geese problems. He notes that while the flags don't eliminate geese problems and damage, they do help to reduce problems and are an inexpensive and quiet alternative to cannons and other scare devices.

He made the flags out of a fluorescent orange plastic-type material 20-in. wide and about 5 ft. long, although he notes that some area farmers use black plastic bags instead. The top of the flag is stapled to a 2 by 2-in. board

20 in. long. This board, in turn, is fastened to a 6 ft. long, 2 by 2-in. stake driven into the ground. The top board is fastened so it can pivot atop the stake and change directions with the wind.

Sebo says that the flags seem to work because of their bright orange color and their movement as they blow in the wind.

He notes that flag placement depends on the crop. For example, in an open alfalfa field, he suggests scouting the field and placing the flags in the area where geese tend to congregate. In cornfields with part of the crop harvested, he advises placing flags, about 3 per 20 acres, about 100 ft. outside the remaining standing crop.

Double-Clawed "Wrecking" Hammer

"It's hard to believe how much time it saves," says Bill Witty, who built a unique double-clawed hammer by welding two 20-oz. hammer heads together.

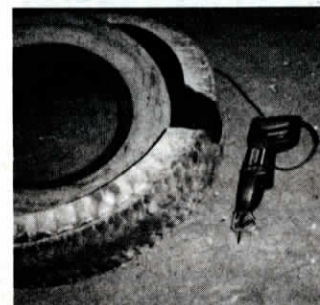
Witty says he does lots of remodeling and got tired of always having to reach for a wrecking bar or block of wood to pull long nails. "You can start pulling with the bottom claw and finish with the upper claw," he explains.



Top claw works great to pull out long nails that bottom claw can't get.

An added advantage of the hammer is its increased weight, which helps knock apart nailed-together wood. The double hammer head is mounted on a hatchet handle that runs through both heads. Key to success of the hammer is using identically matched heads, and cutting off the head of the second hammer.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, William F. Witty, Rt. 3, Box 153, Aragon Road, Montegut, La. 70377 (ph 504 594-4781).



To cut tires, sharpen and deepen saw blade teeth and grind the tip to a sharp point, says Winans.