

## New Gopher Trap's A Real Killer

When gophers strip a 40-acre field of alfalfa and grass to the point that it isn't worth harvesting, you've got to do something. Lee Schwartz of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, built a trap. It worked so well he got it patented. After only a few months on the market, he can't make them fast enough.

"I had a farmer in the area order 50 to control gophers that were destroying a field of lentils," relates Schwartz. "I was showing him how to set the traps. By the time we got to the 30th trap, we heard the traps we'd just set start to snap shut. By the time we got to the 50th, we counted 11 traps with dead gophers. He ordered 50 more traps. They were catching 500 to 600 gophers a day on that field before they cleaned them out."

This year Schwartz harvested a good crop of hay from the field he lost to gophers last year. The difference was the 250 traps he set out this spring after pushing old mounds flat.

"In the two months after setting them, I removed 6,100 gophers," says Schwartz. "When I catch a gopher, I reset the trap and usually catch another one in the same tunnel. If nothing is caught in a day or so, I move it on to another tunnel."

The gopher, or Richardson's ground squirrel that Schwartz is catching, is a small ver-

sion of the prairie dog. It's a common problem on farms throughout parts of the prairie provinces of Canada. It's also common in Montana, North and South Dakota and northwestern Minnesota. The gopher builds a burrow with an open mouth tunnel exit. Schwartz's trap is designed to capture the gopher as it exits its tunnel.

The 3-in. wide, 3/4-in. thick and 18-in. tall trap has a pointed end that acts as both a spade for removing dirt from the mouth of the tunnel and as a stake when setting the trap. The spring tensioned slide acts on a trigger. When the gopher sticks its head through the hole, the slide is released.

"Ninety-five percent of the time, the gopher is caught between the head and the shoulder and is unconscious in seconds and dead in a few minutes," says Schwartz. "The traps need to be checked at least once or twice daily. If the trap is full, another gopher will burrow around it."

Expecting limited sales, Schwartz had 5,000 traps cut, pressed and assembled this past winter. Initial sales were to small property owners who bought 10 to 15 at a time. As word got out, that changed and larger area farmers started buying 100 to 200 traps at a crack.



Trap is designed to capture gopher as it exits tunnel. It has a pointed end that acts as both a spade for removing dirt from mouth of tunnel and as a stake when setting trap.

"Now with our website set up, we are selling traps into the U.S. with orders coming from as far away as Arizona and California," he says. "So far, we've only gotten good feedback."

Schwartz sells his traps for \$15 each plus shipping. The traps come unpainted, but he suggests spray painting them a bright color so they stand out in the field. The traps can be wired to a stake if predators start remov-

ing them to get at the dead gophers. However, part of the trap's attraction is speed of installation.

"You can empty and reset a trap in four to five seconds," says Schwartz.

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## Rings Make Rail Fence Easy To Build

Building a rail fence for horses and keeping it well-maintained was a pain for Gary Thumser until he came up with the idea for "rail rings". The rings let him easily hang rails on posts and holds them more securely than simply nailing or screwing them in place.

"Rail fences are great for horses, but they like to rub against them, and that's tough on the fence," says Thumser.

His solution was simple. He cuts 1 1/8-in. wide rings out of 4-in. dia. steel pipe and welds each ring to the center of a 13 1/2-in.

long piece of flat steel.

To set his rails, Thumser nails or screws the steel bracket to the post and slips rails through the rings. There's a nail hole in the outer side of each ring. He drives in a nail or screw to secure each rail.

Thumser notes that you could also use a longer piece of flat stock and weld more than one ring to it.

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Metal rings make it easy to hang rails on posts. A single nail holds rail in place.

## Moveable Support Turns Two Shop Doors Into One

Thanks to a unique door design, Dale and Tracey Richter can vary the size of the opening in their 54 by 80-ft. shop from 16 ft. wide up to 40 ft. wide.

Key to the design is a moveable support post between the two overhead doors at one end of the building. The Richters can use either the 16-ft. door or the 24-ft. door, or they can open them both and move the support post out of the way.

The post slides to the side on a 16-ft. length of track over the smaller door.

The post is normally held in place by pins at the top and bottom. The bottom pin slides into a hole in the concrete floor, while the top pin locks the post to the shop ceiling. It can be disengaged from ground level because the pin is on a spring and attached to a dan-

gling chain.

"When you move the post back into its normal position, the spring pin lines the tracks up," he says. "I like this system because we can bring both combines into the shop at once, even with the straight-cut headers on them. Or we can bring in our big air seeder - we pull it in transport mode and then open up one wing."

"Another benefit is that in the winter, we can just open the 16-ft. door to bring in tractors or trucks so we don't lose as much heat," Dale says.

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The Richters' 54 by 80-ft. shop has a 16-ft. door and a 24-ft. door with a moveable post in between.



When support post is rolled to the side it creates a 40-ft. wide opening.

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