

He Bales Bales With A Big Baler

By Janis Schole, Contributing Editor

Small square hay bales are preferred by many horse and small stock owners, but their size can mean high labor costs to a hay producer. Now, a patented new "bale buncher," developed by James Toews of Waskatenau, Alberta, solves that problem. It "packages" 12 small bales so that they look and handle like one big bale.

Toews' "re-baler" is used once a field has already been baled. It's pulled by a tractor and bundles the small bales into a bigger one, using twine to hold them all together. Each of the 12 individual bales remain intact so the only difference to the end user is that they need to cut open the bundle to access the small bales.

To build his unit, Toews modified a Hesston 4755 medium square baler by removing the feeding mechanism and replacing it with one he designed to accept bales measuring 14 by 18 by 32 in. long.

"When the first bale comes into the unit, a shuttle pushes it back onto a horizontal table," Toews says. "This table has automatic switches on it so that, when the second bale

comes in, it stands both of them up so they're sitting vertical. A cable elevator below them is timed to the plunger, and when the plunger is at its most forward position, the cable elevator lifts the two bales up in front, directly in the face of the main baler plunger. The plunger pushes those two bales back into the bale chamber. When it has accumulated 12, it ties them together just as if they were loose hay."

Bale size can be adjusted to bunch anywhere from 8 to 14 small bales in one group, but Toews says his experience has shown that 12 works the best.

"Handling and stacking these bigger bales is a much more economical way to deliver high quality hay to the end user in a form that they can easily handle," he says. "For the producer, these bunched bales have the handling economics of big square bales, but the feeding convenience of small bales."

Toews has spent the past four years building and perfecting the system and is now talking to manufacturers about possible commercial production. He has a North American patent on the device.

"I think there's definitely a market for it," he says. "I'm really happy with the way it works. This year, in real heavy going - two swaths raked together so there were a lot of small square bales close together - I was able to make a big bale every 30 seconds. On average, I bunched over 1,200 small bales an hour."

Toews also points out that, by using his re-baler, he was able to single-handedly load 792 bales into a transport van in a little over an hour.

"The problem with marketing square bales normally is that it's hard to find enough help. My system gives the end user the product they want, but you can do it with a 2 or 3-man hay crew instead of an 8-man crew," he says.

Toews welcomes inquiries from interested manufacturers.

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"Bunched bales have the handling economics of big square bales with the feeding convenience of small bales," says developer James Toews.

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Tractor-Powered Picnic Table

Marc Ristow's garden tractor can carry seven adult riders thanks to a 6-seat varnished oak picnic table that's built into his Bolens 1050 tractor.

"I like to collect and restore garden tractors, but this one is my most unique by far," says Ristow. "I call it the model 1000 picnic table. It's fun to drive but I have to be careful because it has about a 7-ft. turning radius."

FARM SHOW found the tractor at an antique tractor show held recently near Jordan, Minn. It's complete with a pair of Harley exhaust pipes on back and one on the side.

Ristow says he likes to drive the tractor in parades at such shows. But mostly he uses it to get around at stock car races, such as the National Hot Rod Association races held at the International Speedway near Brainerd, Minn. At 10 ft. long, the tractor-picnic table can't fit into his pickup bed so he hauls it on a specially-built trailer.

The 1960's Bolens tractor was custom built by a man from Clear Lake, Minn., who had to let go of his invention because his wife wanted more space in their garage. He had cut the tractor behind the front wheels and axle, then built a table with a metal support frame and bolted it to the tractor. He also greatly lengthened the steering linkage.



Marc Ristow's Bolens garden tractor can carry seven adult riders. At 10 ft. long, the tractor-powered picnic table won't fit in his pickup bed so he hauls it on a special-built trailer.

Ristow reinforced the table's support frame and also lowered the seats somewhat. The tractor came with a dollar bill varnished onto one of its footrests, and another dollar bill varnished onto one of the table's seats. "For sure this tractor is worth at least \$2, no mat-

ter what anyone says," notes Ristow.

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