

## Farmer Uses Homemade Concoction To Kill Weeds

A Wisconsin farmer swears he keeps his fields weed-free with a concoction of vinegar, mustard oil and apple cider.

Herbert Noreen of Clayton says his yields last fall ran as high as 134 bu. per acre and the fields were as weed-free as any other farmer in his area. He says he's never used chemical pesticides or petroleum-based fertilizers on the 200-acre farm where he and his wife Carol milk about 40 cows and grow corn, rye and alfalfa.

He found the recipe for his weed-killing concoction in a 1923 issue of the *Old Farmer's Almanac*. The strange mixture was being used at the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Garden but the article said they were having a tough time keeping the ingredients stabilized. Noreen looked around for a solution and decided to homogenize the home-brewed concoction.

At first he experimented with a backpack sprayer and had mixed results. Then he

tried using a much finer sprayer nozzle and applied it in the early morning (or evening) when it wouldn't evaporate so fast. Results were "tremendous" and he's been using his home-brewed herbicide ever since. The final solution consists of vinegar, mustard oil, an Amway wetting agent, and apple cider, which cuts the acidity of the mix somewhat. Noreen won't reveal the exact proportions because he's trying to obtain a patent.

Noreen thinks the acidic vinegar burns back green tissue while mustard oil makes the solution adhere to the weed while also helping to "smother" it. It takes quite a bit longer than a chemical spray to work except on weeds like mustard and morning glory, which have big leaves. It kills those right away, he says.

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## Odd-Row Anhydrous Application

You can save time and fuel by knifing anhydrous ammonia into every other row, according to John Sawyer, agronomist at the University of Illinois' Brownstown Research Center. In comparison plots, he's produced identical corn yields by side-dressing equal amounts of anhydrous in 30 and 60-in. spacings in conventional, minimum and ridge-till systems.

Rather than run down the center of every row, he skips every other row so knives are spaced 60 in. Sawyer points out that corn rows are still within 15 in. of the ammonia strip. In tests, he applied 200 lbs. of anhydrous per acre in both the every-row and skip-row applications.

## Combine Fire Fighting System

An Alberta rancher, worried about the danger of fires while combining small grains, equipped his combine with a fire-fighting system.

Lorne Cooley has been lucky to escape serious fires himself but some large stubble and grain fires have come close to his farm near Pincher Creek in southern Alberta. And he sees lots of burned-out combine skeletons sitting around the country. For his own peace of mind, he designed and built his compact on-board fire fighting system

that consists of a 50-gal. plastic water tank with a hose reel and battery-powered internal pump. The steel-framed unit also holds a dry extinguisher for fighting fuel fires.

"I hope I never have to use it," says Cooley, "but I've talked to lots of guys who have the same fears I had. By getting on a stubble fire with some water as soon as it starts, you can save your combine, your crop and maybe even your neighbors' crops." (Excerpted from *Country Guide*)

## Hoof Size Predicts Calving Difficulty

"After witnessing several thousand calf births in the last 25 years and assisting with several hundred, my husband and I have come to have a pretty good gut feeling about whether a cow or heifer will need assistance," says Heather Thomas, Salmon, Idaho.

"We've always felt there was a definite correlation between the size of a calf's feet and his total size and birthweight. Whenever we see a heifer calving and calf's feet have come into view and they are really big, we figure we'll probably have to help her. Now that we are using some part-Simmmental bulls that throw really big calves, even occasionally with an older cow, if the feet are really huge we often give her just a little help to make the birth easier and quicker.

"And now we've learned that the scientists have proved what we suspected all along: Iowa State University researchers

used a "hoofometer" (a measuring tape designed to fit snugly around a calf's hoof) and after testing the hoof size on calves from 174 heifers, found that foot circumference increased proportionately with birthweight.

"During the study, all cows and first-calf heifers were checked after one hour of labor to measure the calf's hoof size. The calves with larger feet generally needed more assistance during birth, compared to those with smaller feet.

"To get an idea of hoof sizes, the average hoof circumference of the 103 bull calves born in the study was 18.8 centimeters, and the average birthweight 90.8 lbs. The 72 heifer calves had an average hoof circumference of 17.9 centimeters and an average birthweight of 83.3 lbs. The average hoof circumference of British-breed sired calves (both sexes) was 17.9 centimeters and aver-



## Slick Way to Self-Feed Big Round Hay Bales

Instead of feeding individual bales separately with a tractor, why not eliminate the chore work — and the need for starting up the tractor — by strategically arranging the bales in rows so livestock can feed themselves?

"I wouldn't do it any other way," says Wisconsin farmer and school teacher James Schultz, of Clintonville. He teamed up with his veterinarian, Dr. Robert Leder, of Bear Creek, to design a self-feeding system for sheep that won first place in "The 1991 Inventions Contest," sponsored by *Sheep Magazine*, published in Helenville, Wis.

Although their experience has been only with sheep, the inventors are confident the same basic design could easily be "beefed up" to adapt it for beef or dairy animals. "It's inexpensive to build, cuts down on labor, eliminates the need for a chore tractor, and there's virtually no waste," says Schultz of the self-feeding system. Here's how it works:

When bringing big round bales to headquarters, or wherever you want to locate one or more self-feeding stations, you line them up face to face tight against each other, and in rows spaced 1 ft. apart.

Self-feeding panels, made of wood or steel, are 12 ft. wide. Each panel spans two bale rows. For sheep, Schultz drives steel T-posts 12 ft. apart between every two rows. The posts support 12 ft. long 2 by 4's, suspended horizontally about 3-1/2 ft. above ground and secured to the steel support posts. The horizontal 2 by 4's serve as runners which guide and support each end of each panel. The bottom of each panel is suspended 8 to 10 in. off the ground, making it easy for animals to nudge the feeding panels forward as they eat their way into the bales. Panel ends are tied to the horizontal

2 by 4 supports with chains equipped with snaps, making it easy to undo the chains to lift them up and over each T-post as the panels gradually move from one post to the next.

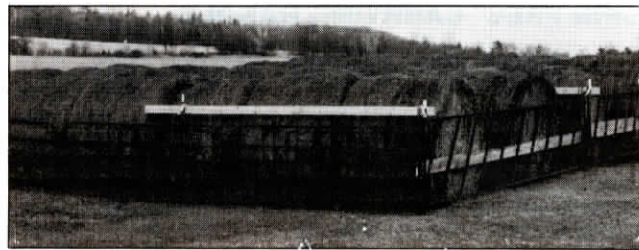
Suppose you create a feeding station 10 bales wide, with 20 bales in each row. You would need five feeding panels (one for every two rows). Before frost sets in, you would set posts 12 ft. apart between each pair of rows. As animals eat their way into the bales and move the panels forward, the horizontal 12 ft. long 2 by 4's can be "walked back" from post to post in 12 ft. intervals. Thus, in this example, you'd need six 12 ft. long 2 by 4's to serve as horizontal support runners for the five side by side panels.

The feeding station can be as wide and long as you want it. But be sure all of the bales are of comparable quality and palatability to assure a uniform front "feeding face" as animals move the panels forward.

For aged ewes, Schultz suggests having one feeding stall for every two animals. The 12 ft. wide panels can be hand-made of wood or tubular steel, or purchased ready made, which is what Schultz did. He bought cattle feeding panels, then boarded them up part way so sheep couldn't walk through the openings. Dr. Leder built the panels he uses out of lumber, using 1 by 4's for the vertical dividers.

Schultz recommends using snow fence, or chain link fence, along the sides and back side of the feeding station so animals can't get at the bales. "If there's snow and ice between the bales, you may have to periodically chip it away to make sure the panels move ahead unobstructed."

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age birth weight, 81.8 lbs., while the exotic-sired calves' hoofs measured 19 centimeters and had an average birthweight of 92.9 lbs.

"You don't have to measure the hooves, however, to know whether or not you're going to have a big calf. A good look at the feet - or even a feel, if you are checking inside the heifer - will give you a good enough clue as to their size. If they are big, you might as well be prepared to help the heifer, unless she has an unusually large

pelvic area, or the calf is sired by a bull that throws exceptionally streamlined calves. Birthweight alone is not the only factor involved in calving ease or difficulty: The shape of the calf (whether he is long and streamlined, or thick and wide), can make a great deal of difference as well."

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