



Reuben Zimmerman buys used New Idea corn pickers from farmers and rebuilds them, converting wide row models to narrow row.



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By Bill Gergen, Senior Editor

## Corn Picker Expert Rebuilds Machines, Makes Parts

Even in this age of high-tech farms and big, expensive combines, there are still some farmers harvesting with ear corn pickers.

But finding machines in good condition can be a problem. New Idea, the biggest manufacturer of ear corn pickers, stopped building units in the late 1970's. No manufacturer makes a new corn picker and most used pickers are set up for 40-in. rows. Finding a narrower machine to match today's row spacings isn't easy.

Reuben Zimmerman, Barnett, Mo., saw the market for rebuilt corn pickers and parts about 10 years ago so he started a business called "Picker Paradise". He buys used New Idea corn pickers from farmers across the U.S. and rebuilds them, converting wide row

models to narrow row. If he needs parts that aren't available, he builds his own.

"I've always harvested with corn pickers, because I like feeding ground-up ear corn. It makes great feed for dairy cows," says Zimmerman. "The percentage of farmers who use corn pickers today isn't very high, but I'm in business because I think there will always be some farmers who use them."

He has buyers in several states looking for machines. "There are still some pickers on farms that haven't been used for a long time, and eventually people get tired of keeping them in storage and put them up for sale. I also buy pickers in poor condition just for the parts."

When Zimmerman first got started, he had

to figure out how to convert a wide row model to narrow. "It's quite an involved process. Halfway through my first one I wasn't sure if I'd ever get it finished, but it turned out good," he says. He converted a few more models and sold them to area farmers.

"Over the years I've sold 50 pickers. Most of them sell for \$3,000 to \$4,000," says Zimmerman. "I work on models with both 8 and 12-roll husking beds. I even have some Amish customers who use horses to pull their corn pickers. They hitch the horses to a power unit, which is then hitched to the picker."

Finding replacement parts for corn pickers is getting to be a problem, he says. "A lot of parts aren't available through New Idea any more, which is why I started manufacturing

hard-to-find parts. I figured someone has to make the parts, or else there will be a lot of disabled machines out there."

One of the most popular parts that he builds are rubber paddle wheels, which replace the original rubber finger wheels on the picker's husking unit. "The original rubber finger wheels get brittle and break off, and they're very expensive to replace. My replacement paddle wheels sell for only about one fourth as much as the finger wheels."

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## Cab, Side-Mount Blade Added To Deere Tractor

"After I bought my 2005 Deere 2210 tractor, I made a cab for it that's 6 in. shorter than Deere's cab so I can fit the tractor into my garage. I also added a side-mounted blade to use with my loader bucket for plowing snow," says Dick Kast, Fairmont, Minn.

Kast has a pellet-burning stove in his garage and wanted to use the tractor to haul wood pellets to it. However, the factory cab on the Deere tractor would've been too tall to fit under the garage door. "The Deere cab was 77 in. off the ground, whereas my cab is only 71 in.," he says. "I think my cab also looks better than the Deere cab because it's better proportioned."

The cab is fitted with a heater, windshield wiper, radio, and interior lights.

He used 18-ga. sheet metal to build the sides of the cab and then mounted a Cozy Cab roof on it. The door windows are made from Lexan plastic, while the windshield and back windows are made from safety glass. The cab bolts to the tractor's rollbar using existing holes in the tractor frame.

Kast says the side-mounted blade works better than front or rear-mounted commercial blades because it catches any snow that comes off the side of the bucket. "Instead of making only a 50-in. pass with just the loader bucket, the blade can push the snow out another 50 in.," says Kast.

The blade measure 18 in. high by 6 ft. long and is made from a piece of 3/16-in. thick steel. A local welding shop cut out the blade while the cutting edge came from a highway department maintenance shop.

The front end of the blade pivots on the axle off an old Ford pickup that's inserted through a hole drilled into a steel tube. The front end of the blade is raised or lowered by a cable that runs over a pulley and attaches to a linear activator. The back end of the blade attaches to a telescoping metal tube that's connected to the tractor's 3-pt. hitch. The distance between the back end of the blade and the tractor can be adjusted by changing the position of a pin in the telescoping tube.

"I'd prefer to have a hydraulic-operated



The factory cab on his Deere 2210 tractor was too tall to fit under his garage door, so Dick Kast made a cab for it that's 6 in. shorter. He also added a side-mounted blade to use with his loader bucket for plowing snow.

telescoping tube but my tractor doesn't have any hydraulics," says Kast. "I can adjust the blade anywhere from 4 ft. out or flush with the tractor by simply moving the pin."

A weight box on back of the tractor helps with traction and is made from 3/16-in. thick metal. It can handle up to 5 weights weighing 80 lbs. apiece.

Kast says he spent about \$500 on the cab and \$100 on the blade and weight box.

He says the tractor and blade are for sale. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dick Kast, 2109 95th St., Fairmont, Minn. 56031 (ph 507 235-6050; dixstir@bevcomm.net).

## Quick Way To Switch Hitches

"My customers got tired of unbolting their 2-in. balls from their tractor drawbars, so I made something I call the Easy Sleeve to solve the problem," says Roger Gutschmidt.

"One day they might be using their tractor for mowing, which typically uses the 2-in. hitch ball, and the next day they might be raking, which uses a conventional hitch pin hook-up. It's a real hassle to unbolt the hitch ball and vice-versa, so that's where the Easy Sleeve comes in."

Gutschmidt welded a piece of tubular steel to a piece of heavy flat iron to form a handy device that makes hitch ball removal a breeze. The Easy Sleeve speeds up the process of switching over because the 2-in. ball hitch

stays bolted to it, and the farmer needs only to quickly and easily pull one pin to remove the entire unit, leaving the drawbar ready to be used for conventional hookups.

Since there are so many sizes and variations of tractor drawbars for the tubular frame to slide over, it's difficult to price them, Gutschmidt says.

"If I know the dimensions of your drawbar, I can custom make an Easy Sleeve to fit your application. Pricing depends on the size."

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The Easy Sleeve eliminates the need to unbolt the hitch ball from your tractor drawbar.



By pulling a pin you can remove the entire ball hitch unit, leaving the drawbar ready to be used.