

## They “Stretch” Tractors To Boost Performance

To improve performance of utility tractors, Penrose Manufacturing in Pueblo, Colorado, “stretches” tractor frames by as much as 14 in. to lengthen the wheelbase. They also pump fluid into tires. The two changes increase stability and traction.

“Moving the front axle forward transfers axle weight from front to rear by 1,000 lbs., greatly reducing stress on that front axle,” says Joe Kahnke, owner. “How much we can stretch the wheelbase depends on the tractor. We may only go 6 in. on a small compact or up to 14 in. on a larger unit. Most 35 to 40 hp tractors get extended about 10 in.”

Kahnke says operators note an immediate improvement in handling, especially when doing bucket work.

“Not every tractor can be extended. For example, cast iron frames can’t,” he says. “With some, when you move the front axle, you have to reinforce the frame. This isn’t a fix that most people should try at home. It takes an experienced eye to look at a frame and decide if it can be done and how to do it.”

Kahnke, who is also a compact tractor dealer, has extended frames on more than 75 Branson, Kioti and TYM compact tractors. With his approach, there is no cutting of the frame. He moves the mounts forward and extends the driveshaft and the power steering hoses.

“Everything has to be lined up just right,” he says. “If you don’t get it straight, it will wear out the splines on the end.”

Filling rear tires with fluid is another important tactic for improving handling, adds Kahnke. Fluid lowers the center of gravity and improves stability, especially when using a loader or other front-end equipment. He uses Ringuard liquid tire ballast. The fluid is 30 percent heavier than water, non-corrosive, non-toxic and biodegradable.

“It’s made from sugar beet juice and won’t freeze down to 35 degrees below,” says Kahnke. “A 30 hp tractor takes about 55 gal. to fill the two tires, while an industrial type R4 tire holds about 75 gal. or nearly 1,000 lbs.”

Kahnke charges \$5/gal. for adding fluid. His wheelbase extension runs \$750 on average. Neither alteration is intended to increase lifting capacity, stresses Kahnke.

“These tractors aren’t intended to pick up a heavier load than recommended,” he says.

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Before the front axle was moved forward to lengthen the wheelbase, this tractor had trouble lifting the load.



After the wheelbase was “stretched”, it had no problem.



Tom Houska says his 3-pt. mounted “chemical roller” works great for controlling dandelions. “There’s no danger of spray drifting onto flowers and shrubs.”

## Home-Built Chemical Roller

Tom Houska wanted to spray dandelions in his lawn without the danger of spray drifting onto flowers and shrubs. So he built a 3-pt. mounted “chemical roller” that wipes chemical onto the lawn.

“It works great - I’ve used it for three years with no problems,” says Houska.

The roller is made out of 8-in. dia. plastic water pipe, with two 8-in. dia. hard rubber wheels driven into both ends of the pipe. Indoor-outdoor carpet is glued and screwed onto the pipe. A 1/2-in. dia. plastic pipe with a series of small holes drilled into it at 1/2-in. spacings mounts above the roller and drips chemical onto it.

The roller is supported by a channel iron frame. A chain connects the roller to the 3-pt.’s upper link and allows the roller to “float” over the ground.

The sprayer is equipped with two 15-gal. tanks and a single 12-volt spray pump. A 3-way valve allows Houska to use the two tanks together, or use different chemicals in each tank.

A plastic shield, magnetically mounted on

the channel iron frame, extends down 3/4 in. from the roller and keeps the chemical that drips out of the plastic pipe from drifting off course in high winds.

While applying herbicides on a windy day normally isn’t a good idea, Houska says he actually prefers to do it then. “Some nurseries say that on still days without any wind, fumes can kill flowers.”

The roller follows directly behind the tractor so I can get as close to trees and buildings as I want without damaging the roller,” says Houska.

A pair of flip-over metal stands at both ends of the roller, along with a third leg under the 3-pt. hitch, are used to store the roller during the winter. “I don’t want the roller carpet setting on a cement floor all winter because it might get flat and not soak up chemical,” says Houska.

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“Mole Hill Destroyer” is an add-on device for land drags that’s designed to make mole hills and gopher mounds disappear.

## Mole Hill, Gopher Mound Destroyer

Stewart and Irene Walker were determined to find the best way to make mole hills and gopher mounds disappear when they designed their land drag called the “Mole Hill Destroyer” six years ago.

The Kamsack, Sask., couple made the first one for themselves, but demand from neighbors led them to start producing the add-on device for others. They now have their custom-built as orders come in.

“The Mole Hill Destroyer mounts onto harrow packer bars in 10-ft. sections. Our mounting kits work for Morris, Flexi Coil, Blanchard, Rite Way and Degelman heavy harrows,” Stewart explains. “They’ll fit 40 to 70-ft. wide machines and we also have 10 and 12-ft. 3-pt. hitch units. On all our units, there are three cutting edges - with the front edge and the shoes made from hardened steel.”

The unit bolts onto your machine, so no cutting or welding is necessary.

This fully hydraulic, auto fold, land leveler will help speed up the haying process while saving money on repairs, Stewart

says. Some of Walker’s customers have further increased the versatility of their units by mounting liquid fertilizer applicators or Valmar grass seeders on the harrow bars.

According to Walker, the Mole Hill Destroyer can be used in the spring, before new plant growth surpasses an 8 to 10 in. height without hurting the plants. The unit also works well between first and second cut, or in the fall.

“Many producers claim it enhances crop growth,” Walker points out. “In the spring, the old crop alfalfa will shatter and disappear, and at haying time, you won’t be cutting the old growth, so you’ll have a higher protein bale that the dairies demand.”

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