Kitchel stalk roller is designed to reduce stubble wear on tires and other equipment. Multiple 44-in. long sections each crush 2 rows of stubble.

Spring tension presses stalks down and crushes them. Wrap-around rebar cleating enhances ground action of roller.

Stubble Roller Saves Money On Tires, Fuel

Eliminate GMO hybrid damage to tires and other equipment with the Kitchel stalk roller. Unlike the various stalk choppers on combines and post harvest or bush hogging alternatives, Brandon Kitchel's solution reduces wear without adding significant fuel costs and time in the field.

"The stiff GMO stubble rips up tires and speeds the wear on planter seed tubes, wiring harness covers and hoses, anything that's made of plastic," says Kitchel. "Stalk choppers on combines are a drain on power, and during or following harvest all choppers take added fuel. Plus they often leave 4 in. or more of the stiffest stubble in place."

Kitchel's stalk roller has little impact on fuel use and doesn't require an added trip across the field. The only power required is to pull the rollers across the field as the combine moves forward. The 2-row rollers lower to the ground when the head lowers.

"I knew I needed more down pressure than just the rollers," says Kitchel. "I've seen rollers that push over the stalk, and then the stalk stands up again as they go by."

Spring tension added to the weight of the units presses the stalks down and crushes them at the crown. Initially the springs added about 100 lbs. of pressure to each roller. Kitchel has since added another 50 lbs. of pressure, though that may be more than is needed.

"I knew we needed to damage the root ball where the resins and sugars all collect when the stalk dries down," explains Kitchel. "Those sugars set up like a rock as they dry. With the springs, my rollers have enough down pressure to break the root ball off, uproot it or shatter it into the ground."

Kitchel's first design was a single ground-driven roller that ran the length of the corn head. However, it didn't allow for contours, waterways and benches. After rolling more than 2,000 acres for several years, he worked with a local mechanical engineer to redesign it. Now, multiple 44-in. long sections each crush two rows of stubble. Kitchel notes that installation of the shorter sections is easier too.

Rebar cleating that wraps around the steel rollers in a chevron pattern enhances the ground action of the roller. Kitchel uses 5/8-in. rebar, welding it to the smooth steel rollers.

"The chevron pattern grabs the ground and walks over rocks better than the angle iron I first tried," he says. "It also smoothes out the ride."

Kitchel tried his new patent pending design out on a few acres last fall. It worked well enough that he's now negotiating manufacturing rights with several companies. It's unsure at this time what the price will be or when the rollers will be available.

"I am collecting emails and letters from people interested in buying rollers for their combines," he says. "When the details are worked out, I'll let people know."

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Bale Slides Make Hay Handling Easier

Donald Green's slick surfaced bale slides make moving bales in and out of his barn easy. Green harvests 10,000 bales a year for sale and delivery to area horse owners, who prefer the small squares. Any help he can get in his mostly manual operation is appreciated.

"I use a bale thrower in the field, but everything else is done by hand," says Green. "With the bale slides, I can move two or even three bales at a time, sliding them to a wagon or truck. It's a lot easier than throwing and I can slide bales out 24 ft. or more by joining slides together.

"The bale slides are about 8 ft. long and 20 in. wide. The slick bottoms came off an old forage wagon that had a treated surface. The sides are wood rails only about 1 in. by 2 in., just enough to stiffen the slides and direct the bales forward. The metal bottoms jut out a bit from the ends of the sides, so they can overlap."

Anchoring the slides is simple, suggests Green. He just buries D-handled bale hooks and ties the lead slide to them. The more the slides slope away, the easier the bales slide.

"I'm 62, so I figure I need to find tools like this that will let me keep doing this work for years to come," says Green. "These slides really help."

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Donald Green uses these slick-surfaced bale slides to move small square bales in and out of his barn.

Roofed Feeder Holds A Week's Worth Of Hay

"I drive truck for a living and only get home once a week to my small beef cattle farm. My home-built, portable hay feeder holds enough hay for a week so I don't have to worry about my cattle running out of feed," says Mike Wilson, Mill Spring, N.C.

He made the 16-ft. long feeder using industrial warehouse shelving racks, tin off an old barn, and an old trailer. It can hold up to 5 round bales at a time. "The feeder's tin roof keeps the hay dry, and it's portable which helps keep the ground from getting too muddy in one place," says Wilson.

"I got most of the materials free and spent a total of about $100. Comparable commercial feeders sell for $1,500 to $2,000."

Each side of the feeder is made from 2 full shelving racks, which in the warehouse stood vertically. Wilson laid the racks sideways and bolted on diagonal cross members to keep cattle from dragging hay back out of the feeder. Then he drilled holes in the trailer frame and bolted the racks onto it. Two more shelving racks were bolted on top of the sides to support the roof. The shelves bolt together where they meet at the top.

He cut off part of another rack and used it to build a slide gate on back. The gate rides on a metal track and is removed to load bales.

The trailer's tongue hooks up to the tractor's 3-pt. hitch. To load bales, Wilson raises the 3-pt. to lower the back end of the trailer down to the ground. Then he rolls round bales in by hand one at a time, blocking each one so that it won't roll back.

Mike Wilson made this 16-ft. long feeder using industrial warehouse shelving racks, tin off an old barn, and an old trailer. It can hold up to 5 round bales at a time.

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