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Quick Way To Handle Big Round Bales

The bale accumulator Dan Monahan designed to pull behind his baler saves time, limits field compaction and makes hay hauling safer. The Plainview, Minn., hay farmer calls it a BPS (Bale Positioning System) and sells it through his business, Ag Iron Concepts.

Thanks to rear swivel wheels, the patented BPS follows directly behind the baler and catches two big round bales as they're released from the baler.

"It functions independently of the round baler and allows the operator to unload

bales on the go so any bales on the BPS can be added to any existing group in the field," Monahan says. "It lets you group bales together so you aren't running over the whole field. And if you have steep hills you can carry bales to a level spot."

The BPS comes standard with a CabCam video system, which allows the driver to monitor baling. Broken bales can be left at an out-of-the-way location.

Monahan has been thinking about the BPS for a decade and teamed up with Paul

Wingert, owner of Wingert Sales and Service in Plainview to develop it.

"We worked with the prototype last summer, testing it in extreme conditions," Monahan says. "Our machine was always in the right position to receive the next bale. It's very user friendly."

The BPS hitches to any brand or model round baler and uses electric over hydraulics with a wire to a control box in the tractor cab. The BPS can be painted to match any tractor color.

Though the BPS is geared to custom balers, farmers who put up a lot of hay or bale in hilly areas will appreciate it, too. Monahan says he has a smaller version that holds one bale on the BPS and one in the baler.

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Giant "Chip Clip" Helps Carry Big Bags

The Handy Camel clip is one of those "Why didn't I think of that?" ideas. The heavy-duty clasp looks like a giant version of clips used to close bags of potato chips. A handyman who needed a way to reseal open bags of cement invented the bag clip in Germany. Tom Gray brought the product to the U.S. and is manufacturing it in Kansas City, Mo., to hit the market in May.

"We've had a huge interest from big farm stores," Gray says. The clip is made from UV-stabilized, heavy-duty polypropylene. It slides on the bag and closes with a ratchet

system. Click it once for thick paper bags and three times on thin bags, Gray explains.

"One size fits all, and it won't tear or destroy the bag," he adds. "It can be used to carry up to 40 lbs. and can be attached at an angle to create a pour spout."

People who order from the website can buy three (\$14.95 each, plus shipping) and get the fourth one free.

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Heavy-duty clasp looks like a giant version of clips used to close bags of potato chips. By attaching to one corner it can be used to pour.

Coal Burning System Saves Thousands Over Propane

Neil Eckelberg heats his home with coal all year for less than he used to spend on propane in a month. The big old farmhouse used 500 gal. of propane a month in the winter. Thanks to a coal field 50 miles away, his coal-fired heat is only \$600 for the entire year. With his furnace, coal and ash handling system, labor is minimal.

"I wanted a heating system that would work for me now, but I also wanted it to do the work when I'm older," says Eckelberg. "My Easy Clean furnace has an auger feed and practically self cleans. An auger brings coal to the furnace, and another moves ashes and clinkers away."

Eckelberg built a gooseneck trailer with a hoist and an unloading hopper with auger to supply the furnace with coal. A homemade auger moves ashes into a second trailer he built to carry it away.

"I stripped down a 1952, two-ton, Chevy straight truck and made it into an 8 by 13-ft. gooseneck trailer that can haul 6 tons of coal at a time," says Eckelberg. "I kept the hydraulic brakes on it and installed an electric/hydraulic power unit so I can use a regular electric brake controller. I figured the extra \$500 was worth not jackknifing into someone's pickup or car."

He also retained the original hoist with its pump/reservoir/cylinder package. However, it maxed out at about 4 tons. Some time later, he got access to several old, dual action, hydraulic power units.

"I took them apart and cleaned them up,

and they worked fine, so I installed them along with a 2-stage cylinder built for truck hoists," says Eckelberg. "It cost me about \$80, and it lifts the 6 tons with no problem."

Eckelberg installed his furnace in an old shed behind his home. He built a retaining wall with a parking pad behind it on a slope behind the shed. He parks his coal trailer there and lifts the hoist. Coal falls into a plywood hopper framed with angle iron and reinforced with 1/8-in. by 1-in. steel strap.

"I used light plywood so it can flex with the trailer bed," says Eckelberg. "Tarp attached over the trailer and the hopper keep rain and snow out of the coal."

The house thermostat triggers a feed auger on the furnace. When more heat is needed, coal is augered onto the burner head. As the head rotates and fills with fresh coal, the ash is swept off and into a pit in the concrete floor.

"Originally I shoveled ashes into a 50-gal. garbage can and hauled them away," recalls Eckelberg. "After I built my ash trailer, I jackhammered a hole in front of the furnace and made a catch-pit out of sheet metal for the ashes. An auger carries the ashes out to the trailer."

The abrasive ash quickly wore out a grain auger. Eckelberg built a replacement with 3-in., 10-ga. steel pipe and 1/8-in. steel flighting welded to a 1/2-in. pipe for a driveshaft.

"It's beefier than anything I could buy, and the materials were less than the cost of a lightweight grain auger," he says.

"When I calculated the costs of the coal



Gooseneck trailer dumps into outside hopper with auger that feeds furnace inside. Ashes are augered out into a second trailer for disposal.

furnace compared to propane at \$1/per gal., it had a 2 1/2-year payback," recalls Eckelberg. "That fall propane went to \$1.75. In the 7 years since, it has paid for itself many times over. It's not maintenance-free, but the only regular labor besides hauling in coal and

hauling away ashes is to switch on the ashes auger once a week."

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