

120-In. Mower Built With Bean Buggy Frame

"I didn't want to spend thousands of dollars on a high-end riding mower because I have plenty of old iron and a few extra mower decks sitting around," says inventor Virgil Davis of Humboldt County, Iowa. Davis, who practices what he preaches, built a riding mower that cuts a 10-ft. wide swath with three 42-in. mower decks. He says the new rig is so efficient he can mow his lawn in just 1 1/2 hrs. compared to 5 to 6 hours with his old 42-in. rider.

Davis started with an old 3-wheeled bean buggy that a friend said was too dangerous to ride. "The buggy was designed so the driver rode on top of the front wheel with 2 wheels at the back. Steering too short or driving into a small hole could cause the rig to tip over," says Davis. "I flipped the configuration so the dual wheels were in front and the drive wheel was in the back. I mounted the 5-hp drive wheel engine behind the drive wheel and put a seat in front of and above it." The drive wheel is connected to the main frame through a swivel. He steers the rear wheel through a

geared shaft that provides the equivalent of power steering because it turns so easy.

Davis mounted three 42-in. mower decks under the buggy frame with 3 in. of overlap between each mower. "That way I can turn 360 degrees and never miss a blade of grass," Davis says. The mowers are belt-driven by a 19 hp Kohler engine removed from an old riding mower. He even fashioned an electric start for both engines, with the battery situated in a metal box above the main frame.

"It's not the fanciest mower by far, but it works like a charm. I can even lift the two side mowers and hold them in a vertical position for storage. It's fun to drive and not near as loud as some of the big commercial mowers you see nowadays. My height control is really good too, because each deck has rollers in front and back, and there are 2 swivel wheels on the front of the frame."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Virgil Davis, 2686 250th St., Humboldt, Iowa 50548 (ph 515 378-3344).



Starting with an old 3-wheeled bean buggy, Virgil Davis built this riding mower that cuts a 10-ft. wide swath with three 42-in. mower decks.



South African Boerboels make tough, smart guard dogs, says Deb Malcolm, who uses them to protect livestock on their Manitoba farm.

South African Guard Dogs Tough, Smart

Willy and Deb Malcolm have always had large breed dogs on their Canadian farm. But none have fit in as well as the South African Boerboel breed.

"We have predators on our farm so we wanted an alert dog guarding livestock," Deb Malcolm explains. In her research, the Boerboel breed kept coming up.

With a history that dates back to 1652 at the Cape of South Africa, the Boerboel breed was developed from Mastiff and long-legged bulldog breeds to be loyal, obedient and great protectors.

The Malcolms' first dog was a male born in Canada on Christmas Day 2010. Shortly after they purchased a female from a South African breeder who Malcolm got to know through her research. Currently, they have eight Boerboels and are among a growing number of registered breeders in the South African Boerboel Breeders Society (SABBS).

Maintaining the breed standard is important, Malcolm says, and dogs must have a score of 75 percent or more at official appraisal events to be registered. Space to run and play and being around "family" is important also.

"This is a big breed that is athletic, agile and quick to train. They seem to think things through, catch on very quick, and problem solve. They are a dominant breed, and if they can, they will outthink you. You need to train them when they are young," Malcolm explains.

Despite their size (as much as 190 lbs. for males and 140 lbs. for females), she says they often act like lapdogs. They also adapt to strangers and are intuitive about children who are afraid of them and respond gently.

Malcolm adds that they sense when someone is not well. She experienced it herself with a health issue, first detected by one of her dogs.

The Boerboel's guardian nature is one of its best qualities. On evening walks, she has had incidents where she knows her dogs detect danger - coyotes or bears - and a dog will get in front of her and push her back. Boerboels like being around livestock and going on "patrol". They will attack predators that threaten livestock.

Because they are shorthaired they need to be indoors during cold weather, but they don't drool or bark unnecessarily. They need to be around people and not be left alone for long periods of time.

The number of available Boerboels is limited so they are expensive. Puppies from registered dogs sell for \$2,000 to \$3,000. Boerboel organizations don't recommend crossbreeding in order to maintain standards and build up numbers.

Like other big breeds, Boerboels can have hip health issues, and their lifespan is about 12 years.

For more information, Malcolm suggests going to organization websites. "I hope to have a Boerboel all my life," she says. "They keep you active - both your mind and physically. They make great service and therapy dogs."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Willy and Deb Malcolm, Box 157, Pine River, Manitoba Canada R0L 1M0 (ph 204 263-5488; Facebook: Rocking Chair Boerboels; rockingchairbb@yahoo.com) or South African Boerboel Breeders Society (www.sabbs.org).

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