

# He Composts Dead Stock In Concrete Mixer

Marty Winchell uses an old concrete mixer to compost dead animals on his mixed livestock farm in Alberta. The concrete mixer makes a great composter for several reasons but one of the most important is that the steel exterior and raised opening keeps wolves, coyotes, bears and cougars out.

"We used to compost dead animals in windrows, but that attracted predators," notes Winchell.

He raises cattle, sheep, pigs and chickens, selling the eggs and meat locally. There is no market for spent laying hens so they are killed. Normally, he would have to pay a rendering truck to haul them away, as with other livestock that die naturally.

He wasn't the only one with the problem, so Bear Smart, an Alberta provincial program, gave him a \$2,000 grant to try his idea.

"With the grant, I bought a cement mixer with a bad hydraulic drive and no truck," he says. "It cost me \$1,000 to transport it here



Entrance to mixing barrel is easy to load with any carcass the size of a large ewe or smaller. Winchell adds sawdust or straw and moisture.

and around \$800 for a new hydraulic drive, plus I had to buy some hoses. I figure I've got about \$2,000 of my own money in it."

What he got for the money was a simple and more than adequate composter. The entrance to the mixing barrel is easy to load with any carcass the size of a large ewe or



Marty Winchell bought a cement mixer with no truck. He drives it with a new hydraulic drive that hooks up to the hydraulics on his tractor.

smaller. Winchell simply adds sawdust or straw and connects the hydraulic drive to his tractor or skid steer hydraulics.

"I spin it a few times and then turn it again in a few weeks," he says. "If I have time, I'll hook it up and spin it occasionally."

Winchell knows if he ran it more often and watched temperature and moisture more carefully, material would compost more quickly. As it is, it requires very little attention and gets the job done.

"If it looks too dry, I add water, or if it starts to smell a bit, I add straw or sawdust," he says. "As long as it is heating, I assume it is working. When it is ready, I just spin it the other direction, and the compost empties out."

Winchell suggests a similar rig would be ideal for a broiler operation where mortality tends to mount toward the end of the growth cycle. "You could put them in and spin them, and by the time the next flock was maturing, the compost would be finished."

One thing he likes is that he has had no complaints from neighbors.

"I'm surrounded by acreages on 3 sides and the river on the fourth," he says. "You have to be a good neighbor. This helps."

He thinks the idea will work for any livestock producer. "If you check around, you'll find a mixer on its truck for around \$2,000. Instead of paying to transport the mixer home, you can drive it and then sell the truck."

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Uniform black color of these Spanish goats is the result of five decades of selective breeding.

Photo courtesy Morgan Frederick/3 Mill Ranch

## Syfan Superior Spanish Goats

3 Mill Ranch black Spanish goats are unusual in a breed that normally comes in a variety of colors. The uniform black color, while maintaining all the hardy qualities of the Spanish meat goat, is a result of five decades of selective breeding.

The 3 Mill Ranch has been raising sheep, goats and cows in the Central Texas Hill Country since the early 1950's.

"They're not 'big', but fast growing. They weather very well against varmints and predators," Tom Syfan said about his Spanish goats. "They are very agile and will climb a tree to get something to eat. They eat all kinds of noxious weeds."

3 Mill Ranch is known for their superior black goats, which start at \$300/billy and \$250/nanny. **A good selection of billy goats are available at this time. Nanny goats will be available after the first 2 weeks of September.** Some goats still have a badger

face (brown lines) that is common in the breed. Tom Syfan was inspired to breed the all black goats when he saw a uniform herd of goats at an auction many years ago. He started with seven black billies, some of which had badger faces. Color was only a fringe factor for him. His first priority was always to breed goats that maintained the hardy qualities of the Spanish meat goat.

3 Mill Ranch continues to carry out the pure Spanish selective breeding program. The goats are agile, very protective mothers, are fast growing, thrive on weeds and brush, are drought resistant, adjust to climates from South Texas to Canada, and have good meat goat conformation.

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Reader Inquiry No. 104