



Jonas Schlabach uses horses and a front-mounted, 24-ft. mower to make fast work of even large fields.



Placing the mower ahead of horses and operator is safer than pulling a trailing mower, he says.

Photos courtesy Lynn Telleen, Draft Horse Journal

Horse Progress Days Featured Innovative Front-Mount Mower

Jonas H. Schlabach's front-mounted cutterbar mower was one of the most eye-catching ideas at this year's Horse Progress Days. The unique design can cut into tight corners, back out, make a right angle cut and turn on a dime for a return swath. The 24-ft. cut makes fast work of even large fields, and having the mower ahead of horses and operator is safer than any trailing mower.

"I've mowed 20 acres in 2 1/2 hrs. with horses," says Schlabach, Family Farm Innovations. He credits a neighbor for the original idea. "He had the brains and we had the tools."

An 8-ft. center section slightly overlaps two 9-ft. fold-up wings. Hydraulic motors drive the blades, and a cylinder lifts and lowers the bars. Hydraulic power lets the

operator on his platform to the rear easily steer both front and back axles. Both the operator's platform and the cutting bars are self-leveling.

"When you hit a bump, instead of a jolt, it just floats," says Schlabach.

The center stem that connects the front and rear serves as a hydraulic reservoir. A tube that runs along the top houses hydraulic hoses that are fed by a pump on the 20 hp. Honda engine on the rear platform. Horses to either side of the stem provide motive power.

"If we have a problem with the blades on either the left or right bar, we simply swing it up out of the way and keep cutting," says Schlabach.

Safety matters to Schlabach and his sons. A battery-operated foot pedal on the platform

floor has to be stepped on or the sicklebars disengage. However, the outstanding safety feature has to be the platform-mounted hitching post.

"We mounted a 2 by 3-in. solid steel post vertically inside a sleeve on the platform," says Schlabach. "If there is a problem, or if the operator simply wants to stop, they release the post so it slides down through the sleeve and is driven hydraulically 10 in. into the ground."

"We developed it because the horses, being in the middle, can't be tied up," adds Schlabach. "We needed to secure them. However, having seen it in action, I think one should be mounted to every horse-drawn power cart. It adds several hundred dollars to the cost, but you could save a whole rig from

a runaway."

An unexpected feature of the front-mount mower is how easy horses adapt to it. Schlabach has hooked several teams to it for a first time with no problems.

"The horses can see everything that is happening, and the mower is always moving away from them," says Schlabach. "When horses see something behind them, it scares them and they try to get away."

Schlabach and sons are now building the mower for sale. Base price is \$33,000. Hydraulic brakes are available for an additional \$1,050.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Family Farm Innovations, 4549 TR 156, Millersburg, Ohio 44654 or Horse Progress Days (www.horseprogressdays.com).

Replacement Light Kits Catching On

Retro-Bright, the Georgia company that produces efficient lighting to replace 4 or 8-ft. fluorescent light fixtures, contacted us recently to update a previous FARM SHOW article about their products (Volume 39, No. 5). "We had an overwhelming response to the story, and since then we've stream-lined our manufacturing, added a line of LED bulbs that are made especially for our kits, and we've negotiated better shipping rates to many areas," says John Sims. Sims goes on to say "because of improvements in our lamp holders and terminal connections, the Retro-Bright fixtures now have a lifetime warranty."

Retro-Bright's fixtures easily snap into fluorescent fixtures after the old bulbs, ballast and ballast covers have been removed. By using LED bulbs, the JS-3 fixture makes

considerably more light with larger energy savings. "When people flip the switch on our lights they immediately come on without humming and blinking. They eliminate costly maintenance and are more cost efficient."

The Retro-Bright kit, includes two 4-ft. fixtures that will convert one 8-ft. T-12 or two 4-ft. T-12s and retails for \$39.95 plus S & H. Quantity discounts are available. LED bulbs bought through Retro-Bright are typically 40 to 60 percent less expensive than through other retailers. Sims adds that additional savings may also be available through rebates from your local power company.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Retro-Bright Corp., P.O. Box 251, Bainbridge, Ga. 39818 (ph 229 254-0799; www.retro-bright.com).



Updated kit lets you easily convert fluorescent lights in farm buildings to specially-made LED bulbs, which produce more light with larger energy savings.

Quality-Built Cutter Parts Built To Last

If you need replacement cutting parts for virtually any harvest equipment, John Webb likely has it. He manufactures more than 2,500 high-quality cutting components for a wide variety of equipment from Deere and MacDon to walk-behind mowers. In addition to the parts and assemblies that he sells direct to farmers, he does custom work for manufacturers. Webb Cutting Components also makes rake wheels from the hub to the tines.

"We use high-quality, U.S.-produced steel and we cover the spectrum of brands," says Webb. "Our sickle sections, sickle assemblies and other high-wear components are made with high carbon steel."

Parts run the gamut from single guards, sections, knifeheads and even rivets to complete sicklebars and cutterbar rebuild kits. You can order by catalog, at the website, or simply give them a call.

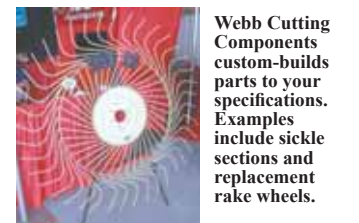
"If it's an aftermarket replacement, we need the make, model and length," says Webb. "The OEM part number, if you have it, is for our reference. If you don't have it, send us a photo, drawing or a sample, and we'll try to match it."

Webb's parts inventory goes back to the basic Pitman mower or windrower. The inventory is strongest on equipment found in the Central Plains. He also carries some high-wear rotary mower components.

Webb knows what parts wear the most from years spent repairing sickles and related components.

"When I started in 1991, more repair was done," says Webb. "Today the tendency is to replace parts rather than repair them."

"We also do specialized manufacturing with minimum orders of 1,000 pieces. We will work with customers from the concept/design stage through prototypes to final



Webb Cutting Components custom-builds parts to your specifications. Examples include sickle sections and replacement rake wheels.

production."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Webb Cutting Components, 204 S. Claude Rd., Grand Island, Neb. 68803 (ph 308

381-7090; toll free 800 578-1480; www.cuttingcomponents.com).