



Lar Voss fixes equipment for his own use or resale, picking up much of it at local auctions including this 3-row pull-type corn picker and 10-yard dirt scraper.

He Buys, Repairs And Sells Auction Finds

Lar Voss has a profitable sideline business fixing up equipment he picks up at local auctions and reselling it. He often resells equipment at auction just a month later. It's an old habit that he developed when he started farming.

"I retired from a career as an electrical engineer and started farming with a couple hundred acres," explains Voss. "As I added more acres, I needed more equipment, and one thing led to another. I would go to the auction and see that one piece was pretty cheap compared to another that was in better shape."

Voss figured he could spend a little time and money fixing up the lower cost equipment and still be money ahead. Along the way he learned to fix a lot of different types of equipment.

When he got into the hay business, he added fixing balers to his list. He quickly realized that while many people knew how to operate a baler, very few knew how to fix one. Before long he was buying balers, fixing them, and then reselling.

He still fixes up equipment for himself. When he needed a corn picker for limited corn acres, he hit the auction and found a 3-row pull-type.

"Usually, the snouts on old pickers are pretty well banged up," notes Voss. "This one had some metal broken loose on one side of a snout and some worn through. It had been used a lot."

Voss replaced the gathering chains and rebuilt the elevator chains and the husking bed, including all new rolls. "There were plastic brushes over the husking bed that were so brittle they broke right off," says Voss. "The brushes and the gathering chains were the only parts I could get from Deere."

Voss went online and was directed to JD Huskers, East Earl, Penn. They had everything he needed. (JD Huskers, ph 717 445-0990).

While Voss put a fair amount of time and money into the old picker, it looks and runs

like new. "In its repaired condition, it is probably worth around \$6,000," he says. "It works fine for my needs and should for a good long time."

Fixing equipment for his own use or resale usually means repainting it, which was one of his biggest challenges.

"Some people just squirt some paint on, but it's a bit of an art to paint equipment well," says Voss.

Hydraulics were another challenge at first, but now Voss works on them all the time. He pulls cylinders apart, replaces seals and replaces hoses with new ones he makes himself.

"I started out with a swaging tool," says Voss. "It was set up for a particular size hose and fitting. Just put the hose in a hydraulic press and squeeze on the new fittings. Now I have a fancier machine that can do 90-degree fittings and more."

Voss doesn't understand why more farmers don't make their own hoses. "I don't know another farmer within 20 miles who makes his own hoses," he says. "It's not hard and saves money and time running to town."

Voss is careful about the equipment he buys. Recently he picked up a 10-yard dirt scraper. The box had slipped out of line with the frame, but rather than fix it, the previous owner had welded steel plates on the side of the box to force it away from the frame. Other than that, it was in pretty good shape.

"We cut the plates off, took out all the bolts, and realigned it," says Voss. "We rebuilt the hydraulic cylinders, installed new springs, and packed the wheel bearings and such. It didn't even need new tires, which can be the biggest expense."

The new springs, which cost \$100 each, were his biggest out of pocket costs. "It was time consuming, but not expensive," says Voss. "I paid \$4,000 for it, and once I paint it, it will be worth \$9,000 to \$10,000."

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Made-It-Myself 3-Pt. Hitch

"My homemade hitch lets me use small tillage implements designed for a 25 hp. Farmall tractor with my bigger Deere 50 hp. tractor equipped with a Cat. II 3-pt. hitch," says Jerry Waldner, Valier, Montana.

Waldner uses small tillage implements, including a small plow, a 4-ft. disk and a 6-ft. field cultivator, in his 8-acre market garden. He had been using a 1976 Farmall 140 25 hp. tractor to pull the implements, which all came equipped with a tapered, spear-type hitch that locked onto the Farmall hitch.

"The problem was that when we let the implement down, the tractor's hydraulic system forced the implement down into the ground which caused the tractor's hydraulic pump to overheat and ruined it," says Waldner. "I replaced the pump, but

was worried the same problem could happen again. So I made a separate hitch that can be used on any of the implements, allowing me to use them on a 3-pt. hitch."

He used 4-in. sq. tubing to form a 3-ft. long horizontal bar and welded a short shaft onto each end to hook up to the 3-pt. lift arms. A vertical 2-ft. high steel bar welded onto the bar pins onto the 3-pt. top link. There's also a short drawbar on back of the hitch.

"The tapered spear on the implement runs through a short rectangular tube and locks into place. It works good and is easy to move from implement to implement. I just remove the spear and pull 2 pins," says Waldner.

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For 40 plus years Norm Macknair has supplied and repaired old horse-drawn equipment. These days he's doing more custom repair and selling fewer parts.

He Still Has Fixes For Old Equipment

Norm Macknair is the go-to-guy for old horse-drawn equipment. With 40 plus years of experience, there isn't much the second-generation equipment repair specialist hasn't bought, fixed and sold.

"I've sent equipment or parts to 8 countries on 4 continents and to all 50 states," says Macknair, who learned the business from his dad.

It is a changing business, he notes. He finds he is doing more custom repair for people and selling fewer parts. First featured in FARM SHOW's Vol. 34, No. 6 for horse-drawn and antique tractor-drawn plow parts, demand for those parts has fallen significantly. He credits lower cost, new steel bottoms versus older style, cast iron on horse-drawn plows. He also feels the antique tractor market is changing. Attendees he sees at shows of old equipment are in their 70's, 80's and older.

As demand shifts, his 14-acre parts yard is getting less use. "I used to go into the yard once or twice a day for parts; now it's once or twice a week," says Macknair. "I don't see as much interest for old tractor-drawn parts or tractors either. I've been taking axles, transmissions and drives to the scrap yard."

Macknair notes that as the industry changes, he is more selective in what he buys. While horse-drawn enthusiasts still like old hay rakes and hay loaders, old manure spreaders are popular with a broader community.

"Most small farmers, including Amish, work off the farm," says Macknair. "However, if they still have a few horses and milk cows, they need a spreader. I'm working on my fourth or fifth rebuild of some."

The corn binder has retained its value and is a good seller. He sells some as is and has done full restores. "I had a guy from Texas buy some last year, and I have binders going to Maryland and Ohio. They are still in demand."

Even more popular than horse-drawn are

pto-driven binders. "I get calls from all over the country for them," he says. "In the South, they use them to cut sorghum, while others use them to cut stalks to sell in shocks for decorations at the big box stores."

One thing that drives up the price, at least in Macknair's region of Pennsylvania, is that many pto-driven binders have been converted for motor drives. All too often it is a one-way conversion.

"People cut the frames and alter them in ways that can't be put back to the original," he says.

Between his dad's experiences and his own, Macknair has learned a lot about working with old equipment. He shares his knowledge freely on the Facebook group Horse Drawn Farm Equipment. He started the group to share current projects. In a recent post, he walked members through problem areas with John Deere horse-drawn plows. He identified 4 major and common issues with photos of them.

One of the most common questions Macknair gets is how to loosen a rusted-up gearbox or other drive. He has a simple solution, but one people seldom follow.

"The answer has 3 steps," says Macknair. "Heat it up and then tap, don't pound. Then, blow it out with an air gun to get rid of the small particles that fall loose. That last step is what people don't do."

If you're looking for a part or an old piece of equipment, Macknair suggests an email, letter, or a call if time is a concern. While he maintains a website, he encourages people to visit the Facebook site instead. He admits the website is out of date, but it gives an indication of the equipment he deals in.

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Homemade hitch lets Waldner use small tillage implements designed for a 25 hp. Farmall, with his bigger Deere tractor equipped with a 3-pt. hitch.

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