State-Of-The-Art Big Square Bale Mover

Justin Matlack's Stinger Stacker 8500 is bigger, better and faster than the low-cost bale retriever introduced by his dad and uncle, Larry and Bill Matlack in 1999 (Vol. 23, No. 2). That bale retriever was based on the Matlack Brothers' first truck-mounted bale hauler, which was built for their own use in the early 1990's (Vol. 17, No. 5).

"Our customers are mostly commercial hay producers from Kansas and points west," says Matlack. "The smaller guys are getting out and the bigger guys are getting bigger. The equipment has gotten bigger, too."

Nowadays Justin runs the company with his brother Karl and cousin Jake. The 8500 Stinger can travel down the road at 55 mph and carry eight 4 by 4 or up to fourteen 3 by 4 big square bales. It has a field-ready weight of 42,500 lbs. and can move an average of 150 bales an hour. It's powered by a 460 hp., Detroit 13L with 1,650 ft.-lbs. of torque.

The early bale haulers were designed to be mounted on any medium or heavy-duty truck frame, including used trash trucks or a schoolbus chassis. What hasn't changed is the basic design with arms that grab bales ahead of the unit, lift them over the cab, and deposit them on back. Unloading is done off the back end of the unit, stacking up to 14 bales at a time in 2 layers of 7 each.

Each Stinger 8500 is built from the ground up with over 500 man-hours in each unit.

"When my dad and uncle started out, it was pointed out that at $25,000, their bale hauler (without the truck) was about the price of a new house," says Matlack. "At $395,000, the 185 is still the price of a new house in many markets and it is completely self-propelled."

The company also makes the 6500 Sticker model for round bales, as well as a cotton modulator (Vol. 44, No. 3).

Matlack shares that the company has had pretty consistent sales for 28 years. The manufacturing arm averages about one unit per week.

"We try to get ahead in the winter months, but by June, we usually have only half a dozen unsold," says Matlack.

He is also working on the next generation of Matlacks to carry the company forward. "I have two boys 7 and 8 with another child on the way," he says. "The older boys' whole life already is Stinger equipment."

Justin Matlack says his Stinger Stacker 8500 is "bigger, better and faster" than the truck-mounted bale hauler introduced by his dad and uncle in 1999.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Stinger, Inc., 302 E. Dean St., Burrton, Kan. 67020 (ph 620 463-8000; ph 800 530-5304; thebest@stingerltd.com; www.stingerltd.com).

Bale Accumulator Bunches Bales

The Lankota Bale Buggy doubles up bales as they drop from a big round baler, saving labor and reducing crop damage and compaction. The trailing bale accumulator is fully automated.

"The operator doesn't have to pull any switches or push any buttons," says Brady Teveldal, Lankota. "The operator can concentrate on making tight bales."

The Bale Buggy requires its own set of hydraulics with ports set to constant flow. Micro switches manage bale movement, holding the first bale until the second bale has been ejected onto the trailer. Only then does the trailer drop the paired bales to the field.

Teveldal notes that other companies have introduced accumulators that carry 3 or 4 bales. However, that affects how rugged the accumulator can be built. Lankota went with a design that carries only a single bale until the second one drops and both are released to the ground.

"This allowed us to build the frame and mounting as heavy as needed," says Teveldal. "Our engineers make sure our equipment is built right, but I grew up on a farm and still farm. They may say it can be built lighter, but I want it built like a farmer would, which often is bigger and heavier duty."

Teveldal also likes the simplicity of the design with features designed around need. The chains that carry the bales off are driven by hydraulic motors with a reversing valve.

"Not every bale is wrapped perfectly every time," says Teveldal. "The reversing valve allows an operator to easily remove loose hay if a miswrapped bale is ejected from the baler."

Safety and convenience are combined with the hydraulic drives, automatic and manual switches. "Some balers require getting to the back of the baler to load net wrap," says Teveldal. "We put in an automatic shut-off of hydraulics when a delay occurs. There is also a manual safety valve on the Bale Buggy so the operator can shut off hydraulic flow when working on the baler."

There are no options, so ordering is simple. The Bale Buggy comes in 2 models. One is compatible with most late model, Deere, 5-ft. wide, big round balers. The other is compatible with most Case and New Holland, 5-ft. wide, big round balers. Both are priced at $12,795. The company is investigating possible fits with other brands.

Lankota Bale Buggy carries a single bale until the second one drops, and then both are released to the ground. The design reduces crop damage and compaction.

Teveldal, technical sales manager at Lankota, uses the Bale Buggy on his own farm. While he appreciates the automation and the various hydraulic functions, he really likes one standard feature on the design.

"The engineers placed a net wrap holder on each side," says Teveldal. "I told them that was my favorite part of the whole design. I think it is often the little things that matter."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Lankota, Inc., 270 West Park Ave., Huron, S. Dak. 57350 (ph 605 352-4550; toll free 866 526-5682; www.lankota.com).

"Shifty" Big Bale Grabber

"Our big bale grabber is equipped with 2 hydraulic cylinders that enable grabbing bales off center. It lets you grab and stack a bale when working in tight places, and also grab and move the bale after it has already been opened," says Melvin Martin, Stevens, Penn. "Customers tell us they really like its versatility."

The Martin Bale Hugger is designed to handle round or big square bales and comes with a pair of cylinders that act independently. Each cylinder is attached to a steel plate that's welded to a pair of horizontal tubes, which slide inside larger tubes as the cylinder is extended or retracted. The cylinder that doesn't encounter any resistance will be the first one to move. The design lets you shift the arms independently to either side. They open from 30 to 76 in. wide.

"You can center the bale inside the arms, or grab the bale from either side. However you drive up to the bale, that's the position it'll grab it whether it's centered or not," says Martin. "The ability to grab bales this way comes in handy if, for example, the bale sets close to a wall and there's not enough room for the skid loader to center the bale. You can keep one arm stationary and move the other one in to grab the bale."

He says you also can grab and move a bale after the strings have been removed, without popping the middle out of the bale. "Both arms will apply the same amount of pressure, so as long as you square up the bale it won't fly apart," says Martin, adding that the Bale Hugger's rounded arms work great for handling bales wrapped in plastic.

Call for current pricing.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup: MZ Martin Welding, 850 Fivepointville Rd., Stevens, Penn. 17578 (ph 717 445-8546; mzmartinwelding@byfax.com).

Martin Bale Hugger is equipped with 2 hydraulic cylinders that act independently, allowing you to grab bales off center.