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Roller Conditioner Dries Hay Fast

By Bruce Derksen, Contributing Editor

Ag Shield Manufacturing says their Recon Conditioner is unlike anything on the market.

"When you use a mower conditioner right after you cut the hay, it creates a very limp stalk and branches," says Darin Hubscher, Ag Shield's Sales Manager. "Even though you condition it, it goes limp and doesn't let the air through the windrow."

The Recon Conditioner doesn't have a traditional pickup but uses spring-loaded steel-on-steel rollers to lift cut hay at speeds up to 10 mph. It features a spiral roller design that creates a high-pressure sharp crimp on every other inch of forage material. The spiral motion of the rollers also moves any rocks away from the machine or pushes them into the ground.

Hubscher says that with the crimping action of the Recon Conditioner, moisture escapes quickly and easily. Even after 8 hrs., it remains shaped and fluffy, cutting drying time almost in half. Rear poly deflectors controlled from the tractor cab divert hay from damp ground onto dry soil in either windrows or scattered swaths, further improving dry times.

"After 6 to 8 hrs. the hay has completed its initial wilt and the heaviest moisture is gone. It's still fluffy and upright letting the air dry

it naturally," Hubscher says.

The Recon Conditioner comes standard with deflectors and a Quick-Set Slider to allow roller clearance adjustment for optimal performance in varying crops. It features a 115-hp. clutch able to power through wads without slowing down or plugging. Maintenance-free steel rollers never need replacing.

Models include the 300 series pull behind machines and 400 series 3-pt. hitch units. 540 or 1,000 rpm capabilities are available. Options include tandem axles and hydraulic rear tedders.

Recon Conditioners are produced and manufactured in Benito, Manitoba, and are shipped throughout North America and as far away as Australia.

The 300 and 400 models range in size from 7 to 9 ft. and retail from approximately \$30,818 to \$36,225 (Can.), plus S&H. Tedder spreader options vary from \$4,250 to \$5,125 (Can.).

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"Everything about it is more sanitary and cleaner," Keener says. "It's by far the best investment we've made (currently \$275/box). The boxes just make our life easier and save time."



Roll Out Nest Boxes Are Good Poultry Buy

Of all the upgrades Kelsey Keener made for his farm's poultry egg production, installing roll-out nest boxes has been the most beneficial and appreciated.

"Roll out boxes are amazing. It's a huge timesaver for gathering eggs and the eggs stay clean," says Keener, one of the owners of Sequatchie Cove Farm in Tennessee.

He purchased 30 units (large reversible size) from Best Nest Box, made from heavy gauge U.S. steel for durability (www.bestnestbox.com; ph 330-558-1120). The nesting area is lined with material designed by AstroTurf®, and eggs that are laid drop into a gently sloped screen-bottom tray so debris can fall through.

Keener mounted the boxes on the outside of his six portable coops for his 2,500 hens.

"You just lift up the covering and can gather eggs quickly," he says.

Because they no longer have to reach under mean, broody hens, his children don't

mind gathering eggs. There's also less labor keeping the boxes clean. Instead of having to replace bedding, if the mats get dirty, they can be pulled out and power washed. Keener purchased extra mats to use while others are being cleaned.

"Everything about it is more sanitary and cleaner," Keener says. "It's by far the best investment we've made (currently \$275/box). The boxes just make our life easier and save time."

That's important for sustainability on the diversified farm that grows produce and fruits with organic and biodynamic practices and pasture-raised beef, pork and chicken in addition to egg production.

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Burrington says he's used the drill setup for three years to unload full carts of firewood, dirt, debris and smaller loads of heavy wet gravel and river rock without any problems. "The hydraulic pump has a 1/2-in. shaft for an electric motor, but instead of that I use my 1/2-in. DeWalt cordless drill to spin the pump," Burrington says.

Cordless Drill Unloads Dump Cart

"I built a dump cart from scratch with a tandem axle and added a hydraulic lift that's powered by a cordless drill," says Pat Burrington, a Montana welding shop owner. "Now I can pull the cart behind my 550cc ATV, haul loads that weigh up to 1,200 lbs., and dump them anywhere."

Burrington made his dual-wheeled cart out of 14-ga. steel using 2 by 3-in. rectangular tubing for the frame. The cart has a walking beam rocker-bogie suspension with 1-in. spindles, a two-way tailgate, and a 2-in. ball hitch receiver. He bought wheels and tires for the rig from Northern Tool that are typically used on a log splitter.

The box lift cylinder has a 2-in. bore and a 24-in. stroke. It's powered by a .12-cu. in. hydraulic pump that Burrington purchased along with the hoses and fittings from Surplus Center in Lincoln, Neb.

"The hydraulic pump has a 1/2-in. shaft for an electric motor, but instead of that I use my 1/2-in. DeWalt cordless drill to spin the pump and it works great," Burrington says. "Spinning counterclockwise it easily raises the box in about 10 seconds. With really heavy loads, like wet gravel, I use low speed on the drill."

Burrington says some people told him "you can't run a pump backward, but in my

experience, a pump is just two gears in a housing, and I don't think the pump knows which way is forward or which way is reverse. The only difference in the pump is a larger opening for the inlet than the discharge. For my setup, it's not really an issue because the drill isn't spinning the motor very fast."

Burrington says he's used the drill setup for three years to unload full carts of firewood, dirt, debris and smaller loads of heavy wet gravel and river rock without any problems. "The drill has a 20-volt battery, so there's plenty of power to lift and lower the dump box several times without recharging the battery. My drill basically replaces an onboard 12-volt battery, a charger, valve and hydraulic power pack unit that would've cost me several hundred dollars. My setup is also lighter on the hitch so I can haul more in the box."

Burrington says, "Anyone who needs to power a small hydraulic system should seriously think about using a cordless drill. The new drills have larger batteries with more power than you think."

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Jeff Siewicki converted an IBC tote to store one ton of feed for about \$100.

Modified Totes Store Tons Of Feed

Poultry farmer Jeff Siewicki modified four IBC totes to make a set of portable feed bins, each of which stores one ton of food for a total outlay of just \$100 each.

Most totes have a screw lid on top for filling and a ball valve at the bottom.

To start, cut off the ball valve and then draw out the spot on the tank where you want the slide gate, which Siewicki makes out of sheet metal. He attaches brackets to the gate to slide through and then makes a feed chute to direct feed into 5-gal. buckets.

The tanks are light enough for easy tipping when it's time to get the last bit of feed out, and Siewicki uses a hoe to scrape out what's left.

Siewicki currently uses four feed tanks mounted on two trailers on his property. The trailers cost about \$300 each, while the tanks came to \$100 each, for a total investment of \$700 to \$800 to store four tons of feed on two trailers.

These tanks can give off some moisture in the summer, meaning that mold may become an issue if you don't use the feed within a few weeks. Siewicki recommends painting the tanks, storing them in shaded areas, or covering them with a tarp.

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