



Loader rig hauls big 4 by 4 by 8-ft. bales at pickup speeds on highway.

STRANGE-LOOKING RIG "WORKS GREAT"

Tractor Loader Mounts On Front Of 4-WD Pickup

You've never seen a loader "tractor" like the one built by Ronald Fulbright, Coffee Creek, Montana, that consists of a Dual front-end loader and grapple fork mounted on the front of a cut-in-half 1972 Ford 3/4-ton 4-WD pickup.

Fulbright primarily uses the high-speed rig to stack and feed 2-ton rectangular hay bales.

"We call it the Grabbit. It'll outwork three \$50,000 tractors because it moves at pickup speeds," says Fulbright, a cow-calf operator who built the rig three years ago with help from his son Jed. "We already had the pickup and loader and spent only about \$4,000 to build it."

Fulbright first stripped the back end of the pickup down to the frame, and then cut it off and remounted it on the front end of the pickup. He then mounted the Dual loader on the truck frame. The front wheels (formerly the rear wheels) are fixed while the original steering axle is still under the cab.

He moved the pickup's 4-speed transmission and transfer case 11 1/2 in. ahead in order to make room for another transfer case that he took off a 1967 Chevy pickup. He made a short driveshaft that connects the two transfer cases together. He then ran a driveshaft from the add-on transfer case up to the front drive axle (originally the pickup's rear axle).

He raised the cab 4 in. by mounting steel blocks on each side of the steering axle, making room for the front driveshaft. He also fitted each side of the steering axle with rubber overload springs. The springs almost double the rig's load capacity so, to keep the axle from bending or breaking, he welded a length of 1-in. sq. high tensile steel (off an old rod weeder) to the bottom of the axle. He wrapped a chain around both sides of the axle and frame to limit how far the axles can move up off the springs so that the pickup can't tip over on rough ground.

The pickup didn't have power steering so Fulbright installed the power steering sector and pump from a 1975 Chevrolet Caprice.

The loader is powered by a 16 gpm hydraulic pump that mounts ahead of the engine. He moved the radiator and fan ahead 24 in. and used a pair of U-joints connected by a slip shaft to shaft drive the pump off the engine crankshaft. The pump sends oil to a remote 3-speed valve mounted at the base of the loader that has cables going up to the cab. The cables are controlled by three levers - one to raise or lower the loader, one



Dual front-end loader, grapple fork mount on front of cut-in-half pickup.

to tilt the bucket, and one to operate the grapple fork. He also ran a shaft directly off the water pump up to the repositioned fan. "People scratch their heads and wonder what it is until they see it work, then some of them laugh," says Fulbright. "However, they don't laugh when I pass them on the road with a trailer load of bales while they're still driving to the field on their new tractors. It rides a little rough but that isn't a problem. It took two years to build in our spare time. It's highly maneuverable and lets me load and unload big 4 by 4 by 8-ft. bales in comfort in the winter.

"We can go up to 50 mph in the field if it's not too rough. I can unload bales from a semi trailer and pup trailer combination and stack them in only about 20 minutes. The short wheelbase makes it highly maneuverable. The pickup's original engine was worn out so I replaced it with a V-8 Super Cobra Jet gas engine out of an old Mustang car. The 420 cu. in. engine has about 400 hp and is equipped with a high performance ceramic clutch. It has more than enough power. I replaced the original tires with Michelin 7.50 by 16, 14-ply off-road tires that can withstand the impact of heavy loads over rocks, etc., at high speeds. We put chains on the tires whenever we have to use it in deep snow.

"Most of the loader's weight is over the front axle. We 'fish plated' the entire frame for added strength and mounted a screen over the radiator in order to keep chaff and hay from causing the radiator to overheat. We mounted a light on back of the cab and put a spotlight on top of it for feeding bales at night during the calving season. We also cut a 2 1/2-in. dia. hole in the bottom of the bucket so we can tow it with the gooseneck ball on our flatbed pickup. It lets one person pull the loader tractor to other fields."

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Giant planter consists of Deere vacuum planter units mounted on a Friesen toolbar. HOLDS 54 BU. SEED, 1,300 GAL. FERTILIZER

36-Row 20-In. Planter

By Delores Meister

When Greg Kreikemeier, West Point, Neb., pulls into a field with his Deere 8770 tractor and starts hydraulically unfolding his home-built 60-ft. wide "super planter", people driving by on nearby roads often stop to watch.

Kreikemeier engineered and constructed the planter in his farm shop with the help of two hired workers. It plants 36 rows spaced 20 in. apart, applying starter fertilizer in each row. With both row markers down, the machine spans 120 ft.

The 36 Deere planter boxes hold 54 bu. of seed corn, or 90 bu. of beans. Two tanks mounted on the tractor carry 1,300 gal. of fertilizer. Once filled the planter can plant 120 to 180 acres at a rate of 40 to 45 acres an hour. Kreikemeier says his goal is to be able to reload the planter in 15 min. but he's still working the bugs out of an automated system.

The planter has already planted 3,800 acres of corn and 2,200 acres of beans. For transport, hydraulics fold the machine down to 16 ft., which is about the width of an 8-row planter.

Kreikemeier plants crops for other farmers in exchange for labor and machines on his own place. "One rig covering many acres is more efficient than several farmers each owning an 8-row planter."

To build the big planter, he used Deere vacuum planter boxes mounted on Friesen toolbars. Operation of the planter is controlled by a Big John monitor in the cab of his Deere 8770 300 hp. tractor. The monitor can handle 36 seed monitors, fertilizer application and the hydraulics. "You program what you want as far as plant population and amount of fertilizer. Once the planter is full, I don't have to leave the seat of the tractor," he says.

The 3-section planter flexes in two spots.

Kreikemeier says the jury is still out on 20-in. corn. "I did a lot of research last winter before deciding to go to 20-in. rows. I guess time will tell. I haven't talked to anyone who hasn't had a 5 to 10 percent increase in yield. Just a 4 percent increase will pay for the change over time."

He plants a dryland population of 24,000 to 28,000 plants per acre. On irrigated land, plant population ranges from 30,000 to 36,000 plants per acre. One benefit of the practice, he notes, has been reduced amounts of herbicides since the tighter foliage reduces weed growth.

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Old Tire Makes Dandy Hand-Held Squeegee

Tractor-mounted scraper blades made from big rubber tires have been on the market for years. Now an Iowa hog producer has come up with a hand-held 18-in. wide, "push broom" tire scraper.

Kent Schelling, of Inwood, uses half-sections of 18-in. airplane tires mounted on a 5-ft. steel handle. The handle bolts to a 12 ga. galvanized steel plate attached to the upper tire sidewall.

"I call it the Sloppy Joe because it works great for moving liquid manure or water," says Schelling. "The sloppier the manure, the better it works. The plate keeps manure from splashing back at you even if you use the scraper aggressively. You can hit manure at a dead run without having it splash on you. It'll jump ledges 1 1/2 to 2 in. high.

"It's built strong enough to stand up to years of use. You can also use it to move grain or loose dirt. It reduces the amount of dust because you're pushing the material in one continuous motion instead making sweeping motions.

"I buy the airplane tires from a Texas supplier. I use airplane tires because they



have the right combination of width, depth, and stiffness. The sidewalls are about 3/8 in. thick. The bias ply cords on the tire break the friction along the floor, allowing the tire to glide freely. The sidewalls on car tires are too thin and flimsy."

Sells for \$35 plus S&H. Schelling is looking for dealers.

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