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Lightweight Double-Action Sickle Bar

Italian manufacturer Maschio Gaspardo created an upgrade to the sickle bar mower 20 years ago that is gaining the attention of small property owners with compact tractors (25 hp. and higher).

What sets the Fiore model apart from other sickle mowers are its anti-vibration features and double action—both the sections and the guards move.

“It doesn’t require grease with the anti-vibration bushings, so there’s less maintenance,” says Alixx Boynton, marketing manager for Maschio Gaspardo’s U.S. division in Dewitt, Iowa. “That also extends the life of the blades and the connecting rods.”

Besides using it to cut hay, customers use it to cut weedy areas, ponds, embankments, and ditches. The cutter bar can be set at 90 degrees or minus 45 degrees. YouTube video

testers comment that because the mower is light (ranging from 551 to 608 lbs. in the four models), compact tractors feel stable even when cutting on slopes. The sickle bars range from 4.76 ft. to 7.71 ft. in length.

The Fiore has a 3-point hitch for Cat. I and II and runs at 540 rpm. It has a hydraulic bar lift and can also be operated manually.

The Fiore and other Maschio equipment are available through dealers all across the U.S. that can be found on the website, Boynton says. Costs start at \$5,000.

“It’s a lightweight and low-cost machine,” Boynton adds. “People realize it’s for everyday use beyond farming.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Maschio Gaspardo North America, Inc., 112 3rd Ave. E., Dewitt, Iowa 52742 (ph 563-659-6400; www.maschiogaspardo.com.).

DIY Chicken Feeder

Not sure what to do with your spare 5-gal. water jugs? Consider turning them into chicken feeders or waterers. You’ll need two jugs per feeder or waterer. Transparent jugs work best, as they make it possible to monitor levels and know when it’s time for a refill.

Start with a clean jug and use a hole cutter on a handheld drill to cut six round holes lined up horizontally along the bottom third of the jug. Next, use an angle grinder to cut the jug in half so that the holes are part of the original base. Use sandpaper over every cut to remove any plastic burrs to prevent the chickens from hurting their necks as they poke them through.

Next, draw a small circle within the cap and dig it out to form a hole that’s large enough for the feed to come out. Fill the intact jug with food or water and screw the altered cap in place.

Carefully place the full jug within the base



Chicken feeder and waterer made from 5-gal. plastic jugs are easy to make.

of the altered one, positioning it so some feed or water filters out. Note that both the feed and water will stop filtering out once it hits equilibrium at the mouth of the bottle.

The resulting feeders or waterers offer a sturdy, durable, and economical solution for feeding or watering your chickens.

Magnet Stops Tail Swatting

Anyone who has milked a cow by hand knows how annoying, painful, or disgusting it can be when a cow’s tail swats your head. Norwin Willis solved the problem with a magnet and a piece of twine.

He and his wife, Ruth, use regenerative agriculture practices and sell eggs and meat from their Sexsmith, Alb., farm, including offering CSA memberships selling meat. They also own a couple of cows to milk for their own use.

Willis said that for a while he tied the cow’s tail with baler’s twine to the milking station. But his wife remembered that when she was a child a neighbor did that and forgot to untie the tail after milking. When the cow pulled

away it broke off part of its tail.

“So, I found a strong, round magnet at an industrial supply store with an eye hook,” Willis says. He added a piece of twine that loops on the eye and the tail and puts the magnet on the metal frame opposite the side he milks.

If he forgets to remove the rope, the cow can pull the magnet off the frame without tearing her tail.

The cows quickly adapted to it, Willis says. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Norwin Willis, RR 2, Site 15, Box 19, Sexsmith, Alberta, Canada T0H 3C0 (ph 780-897-9462; norwin.willis@gmail.com; www.goodfoodfarm.ca).

Rolling Orb Provides Chickens Freedom

Chicken Orbs are designed to give backyard poultry greater freedom of movement without stressing their owners. The 55 cm (about 22 in.) spherical rolling enclosures allow chickens to free range without the negative consequences like flying into trees or digging through garden beds and upsetting landscaping. The Orbs also make it easy to catch chickens once it’s time to return them to the coop; no more chasing required.

They’re an Australian invention from Danni Paraha, who wanted to incorporate chickens into her backyard. Problems arose when the chickens began to wreak havoc by digging up her yard. Determined to find a compromise between cages and free-ranging, she began tinkering with what eventually became the Chicken Orb.

To be clear, the orbs aren’t designed to protect chickens from predators, though they do act as a visual barrier to deter them. They do help with dogs, though. Past customers have shared that the Orbs help dogs lose interest in chickens because they restrict their ability to run, which curbs a dog’s instinct to chase. To ensure safety, you’ll still need to watch your birds while they use them. They also allow owners to direct their chickens where they want them, perhaps the weediest parts of the yard or the portions where you want a little extra pest control.

Using the Orbs requires a training period for chickens, during which the birds might get tangled up. Stay at least two paces away as they’re learning so they don’t associate you



Orbs aren’t a replacement for coops, the birds will still need private space to lay eggs and get out of the weather.

with issues. They’ll learn the nuances soon enough. Orbs aren’t a replacement for coops, the birds will still need private space to lay eggs and get out of the weather.

They’re available to order off the company website. Pricing starts at \$46 per Orb.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Chicken Orbs, P.O. Box 109, Kelmscott, Western Australia 6991 (ph +61 (0) 400-227-534; chickenorbs@gmail.com; www.chickenorb.com).

DIY Broom Head Scratching Post

Keeping livestock comfortable can be challenging, especially in hot, dusty weather. A DIY scratching post may solve their problems. All that’s necessary are a few push broom heads and a sturdy place to mount them.

Broom heads make for budget-friendly, durable scratching surfaces, and can be mounted anywhere that can withstand the pressure of a full-sized animal pressing against it. Consider lining up multiple broom heads next to each other to ensure the animals have numerous access points. Use 2 to 3-in. screws to attach the broom heads to a vertical surface. Make sure that the screws are well hidden to ensure the animals won’t hurt themselves accidentally. Plan on adjusting and tightening them occasionally as the animals put them to use.

One broom head can work, although multiple make the scratcher more accessible for multiple animals at once. They tend to be cheap at yard sales. Think through the height—too low, and the animal won’t reach it. Some prefer to mount them to freestanding 4 by 4 posts or trees.

If brooms aren’t handy, it’s also possible to make scratching posts from old door mats (preferably coconut fiber, though rubber mats also work) or synthetic turf.

Options abound for cheap, DIY scratching posts. Consider experimenting with several



Photo courtesy of www.cowgirlmagazine.com

Broom heads make for budget-friendly, durable scratching surfaces, and can be mounted anywhere that can withstand the pressure of a full-sized animal pressing against it.

options to ensure you find one that suits your setup. No matter what you use, your animals will surely appreciate the effort.



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