

Niagara Fabrication plans to continue and expand the Magnatrac line of crawlers.



Famed Little Crawler On Track To Change

After over 50 years of being made by Struck Corporation, Magnatrac (Vol. 30, No. 6) is headed out on a new track. The new owner is enthusiastic about the future as he learns first and secondhand about the machines.

"I always dreamed of having one, and after buying the company, I brought an RT1150 home in the back of my pickup," says Greg Linsmeyer, Niagara Fabrication. "They seem

like toys, but the work they do is impressive. They have a lot of drawbar pull and great traction. They also have an unbelievable fan base of loyal customers, some with thousands of hours on their machines."

"I plan to continue operations as they are while introducing more robust models with a more modular design," says Linsmeyer. "Our goal is to grow the business into the light

industrial market, beyond just homeowners."

Attachments are one area he plans to grow. He notes that existing attachments were adapted from use with larger tractors. He intends to right-size them to the product line. "They work, but they could work better, and with more attachments, the Magnatracs can do even more," says Linsmeyer.

He also plans to add horsepower and speed and increase comfort. "We're looking at cabs and other operator protection," says Linsmeyer.

Linsmeyer recognizes that upgrades and improvements will add costs to the machines, long noted for their low prices. He hopes that increased sales will reduce manufacturing parts. Until now, each machine has been effectively custom-built. Sales varied from 80 to 120 per year.

"We'll continue to support older models back to 1994, anything with hydrostatic drive," says Linsmeyer. "As we make improvements in new models, we'll also add more components like track pads and cam controls that can be retrofitted to older machines."

Two things that Linsmeyer has no plans to

change are the Struck Gold color and using as many components made in America by Americans as possible. "American-made is getting to be more and more important, and we want to support that," he says.

Linsmeyer says he's heard from customers with Magnatrac mini dozers from the company's early years. The history of the company was one reason he bought it.

"I'd been looking at it for the past 7 years, and when it became available, I wanted to keep it from closing its doors," he says. "I'm getting lots of customer feedback on what to change."

Since taking over the company, Linsmeyer couldn't believe the archives of past products and parts. While current models include bulldozers, track loaders, and backhoes, discontinued models include zero-turn lawn mowers and little jeeps. Some may see the light of day again as he considers reintroducing some old products.

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Many farmers have left their most flood-prone land to grow fallow, but cultivating rice might offer an attractive alternative.

Cornell Researches Rice In New York

New York State farmers are experimenting with rice, thanks to a research program spearheaded by Cornell University.

Though rice is traditionally grown in flooded paddies within the tropics, the grain is well-suited for a variety of growing conditions. That makes it appealing for Northeast farmers facing changing weather conditions that affect the severity and frequency of rain and flooding. Many farmers have left their most flood-prone land to grow fallow, but cultivating rice might offer an attractive alternative.

"The goal of the project is to provide farmers with the tools and training needed to grow rice locally, using sustainable and regenerative methods," says Jenny Kao-Kniffin, Ph.D. and Associate Professor for Cornell's School of Integrative Plant Science. "We're starting the second year of testing agronomic techniques that focus on integrated pest management (IPM), and we're examining different rice varieties that are appropriate for New York's climate."

While flooded paddies are the traditional way to grow rice, standing water isn't required. In fact, rice is the only major crop that can take oxygen out of the air and send it down to its roots. The primary reason rice paddies are flooded is to suppress weeds for easier cultivation.

Many farmers feel overwhelmed by the steep learning curve of rice cultivation. Most necessary equipment, including a harvester, dryer, planter, dehuller, and polisher, must be imported from Japan. However, they're often available second-hand and

are specially designed for use on small plots of land. Cornell's research program aims to break down barriers like this so rice cultivation becomes more accessible.

To date, Cornell's research program is tracking two demonstration plots: one in flooded conditions and the other in a dry field. Between the two, they aim to replicate the range of conditions New York farmers will increasingly face. For example, due to flooding, one test paddy at the Homer C. Thompson Vegetable Research Farm was decommissioned from cultivation 15 years ago. Both experiment plots use varieties that grow in the upper limits of their range—including Northern Japan, Korea, Ukraine, and even Russia. These cold-hardy varieties have the best chance of thriving.

So far, the research shows that rice is surprisingly profitable. Some farmers net \$12,000 or more per acre of rice production, over 15 times more than they could expect off a corn harvest. However, it's far from free money. Cultivating rice is an intensive process that requires a lot of labor. That's why many farms see rice as an add-on for farmers growing other food-grade grains, including corn, soybeans, wheat, and oats. It's a convenient crop to sneak into field spaces that tend to be too prone to flooding for reliable use.

The research program is also producing online rice cultivation guides and researching the most suitable growing areas across the Northeast. Cornell's research department is assessing state maps of flood risk, topography, and existing land use to determine which



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New Castration Tool For Calves And Lambs

Jodi Suchoplas manages and calves 340 cows on an open quarter of land, so she needs to be efficient when handling, vaccinating, and castrating newborns, as there's limited protection from the elements and agitated mothers.

To castrate the bull calves quickly, she cut a slot into a small piece of plastic to slide over the scrotum just above the testicles. The slot was sized to hold the testicles securely in place for banding purposes.

After discovering how well her simple invention worked, she patented, registered, and produced the bright orange plastic TestiGrip for commercial sale.

"Just slip it on above the testicles, and once you're sure they're both in place, do the banding," Suchoplas says. "It holds them securely, so they don't pull one back up or away. Getting them down properly can be a big fight, but with the TestiGrip, you can't miss them once you have them."

She recommends using them on newborns up to 2 weeks old, although they'll fit calves up to a month old.

Suchoplas also developed a TestiGrip Mini for newborn lambs as sheep producers had

inquired about an option.

"Both the TestiGrip for calves and the Mini for lambs have been selling well since late last summer," she says. "Everyone is happy with them. We took a lot of feedback from producers and did many demos and alterations to ensure we got the sizes correct."

Manufacturing is done in Regina, Sask., and all labeling is completed at the farm. TestiGrip is currently selling in Canada and the U.K. Suchoplas hopes to add distributors to the U.S. market soon.

The TestiGrip sells for \$25, and the Mini for \$18, plus S&H. Better pricing is offered for sales of larger numbers.

"They're simple but useful," Suchoplas says. "It's less stress on the producer since you know you're getting it done quickly and correctly. We try to promote proper castration methods as too many people are doing it wrong, adding to vet bills and market losses."

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areas show the most potential for rice production. "We're currently researching ways to minimize greenhouse gas emissions and reduce water use so that New Yorkers can enjoy locally grown rice that increases wildlife habitat and strengthens local economies," says Kao-Kniffin.

The goal is to focus on existing agricultural floodplains rather than converting natural areas or wetlands into paddies. Further research will investigate how rice fields

affect habitat space, stormwater, pollution mitigation, and other factors.

In the long run, Cornell hopes its research will help farmers dedicate small portions of their land to rice production, gradually expanding as they learn the nuances of this unconventional crop for American farmers.

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