

In addition to grading driveways, the Grader works well for prepping a worksite before laying concrete, leveling around a house, and restoring logging sites after a project wraps up.



## Custom Grader Levels, Wipes Out Potholes

D.A. Hochstetler & Sons manufactures the Reliable Driveway Finisher Grader. This heavy-duty attachment has adjustable cutting edges and will excavate and grade driveways, parking lots, and construction sites. It's suitable for both commercial and residential buyers.

The company is a fourth-generation fabricating and machine work business based in LaGrange County, Ind. The inspiration for the Grader came about when a customer walked into the shop with a picture of an attachment that was only available to rent but not purchase. "He asked us if we could make one for him," says Kenny Hochstetler, a company employee. "So, we got to work building one. It took six prototypes, but by the seventh, we got it right." The Driveway Grader has been gaining traction ever since. "In mid-August, we made our thousandth grader in 7 years."

The Grader works well for prepping a worksite before laying concrete, leveling around a house, and restoring logging sites after a project wraps up. When driven over a pothole, the Grader fills it up. "If you

want to level anything off, it's perfect," says Hochstetler.

The Grader's design will save users money in the long run. Its blades are reversible and adjustable up and down. This makes it possible to reverse the cutting edge as they wear down to get double the use out of it. Likewise, it makes it possible to redistribute and reuse driveway stone. "Many of our customers used to buy stone yearly," says Hochstetler. "Now, one guy tells us that he hasn't bought any stone in 3 1/2 years. It pays for itself the first year!"

D.A. Hochstetler & Sons ships nationwide. Single and double models are available, both of which have two cutting edges. The double model can attach on both ends, removing the need to back drag. "I don't like to brag, but we just don't get bad feedback on this," says Hochstetler. "Contact us directly for pricing and availability."

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Brooder ceiling with holes for light, flue, and thermometer with plastic curtain and chicks (left) and metal cover over vault extending beyond the brooder (right).



## Off-Grid, Mini-Brooder Keeps Chicks Warm

Living off-grid, Jeff Hoard has found lots of innovative ways to get things done, like his wind-powered pellet mill (Vol. 37, No. 5) and more. When it comes to brooding chicks, he uses everything from setting cubicles for hens to a brooder lit by solar power and warmed by diesel-burning house lamps.

"Years ago, in my unheated and uninsulated barn, I made three small private cubicles about 2 by 3 ft. each with small doors to a protected outside pen," recounts Hoard. "This way, after hatching, the hens take the chicks outside to a safe environment. In one of the cubicles, I decided to make a brooder."

Hoard set out to make life easier for the chicks. "For the first week or so, they

need light, or they pile on each other, killing many," he explains. "My 30 by 24 by 12-in. brooder can handle 20 to 25 chicks, just right for our needs."

The brooder has three sides and is lined on the inside with thin Styrofoam. It's protected from the chicks by a thin layer of plywood glued in place. A 3-piece plywood lid with cutouts for a thermometer, a flue, and a small light lays over the top.

"I cut a rug scrap to cover the top for a little insulation," says Hoard. "The light I use in the brooder is a solar yard light. I put it out to charge during the day and then insert it into a 2-in. hole in the lid."

The heat for the chicks is provided by two oil lamps inside a 48 by 12 by 18-in. concrete vault. The vault was constructed with half



Heavy-duty tines on the end of the steel arm work like fingers across the face of the silage. The arm extends the tines out from the lift arm mechanism of the skid steer, telehandler, or payloader for greater reach.

## Bunker Silage Facer Boosts Efficiency

The Easy Rake Silage Facer from Hanson Silo takes silage off the face of silage piles without affecting quality and does it faster and safer than other methods. It also does the job with fewer moving parts for less maintenance. They make models that can reach out up to 40 ft.

"The Easy Rake Silage Facer was developed and brought to market by dairy farmers," says Mike Hanson, Hanson Silo. "We sold facers for years and had looked at different types, like rotary facers. The Easy Rake fits our model. It's simple, with virtually no moving parts to replace. It's kind of one-and-done."

Hanson Silo makes a wide range of facers starting at \$3,300. The long-arm attachments fit on a wide range of equipment, from skid steers to telehandlers, tractors, and payloaders.

The heavy-duty tines on the end of the steel arm work like fingers across the face of the silage. The arm extends the tines out from the lift arm mechanism of the skid steer, telehandler, or payloader for greater reach. Tine units come in 6, 7, and 8-ft. widths. Arm lengths vary from 4 ft. to 20 ft., and weights range from 500 lbs. to 2,500 lbs.

A quick-connect coupler is mounted to the rear of the Easy Rake frame, eliminating the need for the operator to leave the cab when shifting between facing the silage and using

a bucket to load the silage into a mixer or feed wagon.

With an Easy Rake Facer sized to the bunker face, it pulls free only the silage needed for that day from the top of the face down. This prevents dangerous undermining, breaks up large chunks, and blends forage ahead of the feed mixer. It reduces spoilage and dry matter loss and retains particle length. Other more aggressive, motorized facers can grind silage particles up.

With no moving parts, there are no bearings to go out, chains and tighteners to be replaced, motors and sprockets to give out, or hydraulic hoses to be unhooked.

Hanson Silo sells the Easy Rake Facer through local dealers of feed mixers and other equipment. "TMR mixer dealers have been our most successful dealers," says Hanson. "They understand the importance of maintaining quality feed ingredients."

The Easy Rake Facer may have started life on a U.S. dairy farm, but its reputation has spread. "We've sold quite a few outside the U.S.," says Hanson. "We have a dealer in Australia and have sold them in Uruguay, China, Russia, and Hungary."

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of it lying under the brooder. The other half extends in front of the brooder. The bottom and side walls are about 2 in. thick with wire mesh embedded in them for strength. Eighth-inch metal plates rest over each half of the vault. The portion under the brooder and the wall above it are tightly caulked to prevent carbon dioxide from leaking into the chick's area. Slits in the exterior plate allow ventilation for the lamps.

"The vault and the metal lid prevent the chance of fire," says Hoard. "We use diesel fuel in the lamps instead of the more expensive lamp oil."

Hoard spreads about 3/4 in. of coarse sand over the floor of the brooder to disperse and temper the heat from the lamps.

Hoard accesses the lamps from the portion of the firebox that extends in front of the brooder. "I made a simple metal tray about 2 ft. long for the lamps to stand on," he says. "I can slide them in under the brooder or out to remove and fill them once a day."

On the open side of the brooder, Hoard installed a sheet of plastic. He cut vertical slits in it at 2-in. intervals. This allows the chicks out of the brooder area while retaining heat.

Hoard reports the heating system has worked well. "It doesn't take a lot of fuel as

long as I clean the tiny air vents and check the wicks before the season," he says. "When I fill the lamps for the evening, I simply adjust the wicks up or down depending on the expected temperature. In mid-September, we had 20 chicks in it, and temperatures fell to 23 degrees."

While Hoard sized the brooder for his personal needs, he suggests it could be expanded to hold more chicks. In his case, he designed it so the above vault portion could be broken down.

"If I want, I can use the cubicle for a setting hen, so it doesn't hinder our normal process," he says.

The solar-powered light has worked well, and Hoard has no plans to replace it. However, he suggests the lamp light could be used instead.

"To make the brooder completely non-electric, I could cut a 2 by 3-in. rectangle in the edge of the metal plate," he says. "I could caulk a piece of Plexiglass in place with a small grate over it to reflect the lamp light into the brooder."

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