

Overhead Track Makes It Easy To Feed Round Bales

Feeding big round bales to cows in stanchions is no longer a problem for Minnesota dairyman Paul Beckel who came up with an overhead track system that carries bales right to the animals.

"It's easy to use and it was easy to build. I've got two systems in operation and they're the biggest labor savers on my farm," says Beckel, who farms near Wadena.

The system consists of a 70-ft. length of overhead barn cleaning track that originally was designed to carry a bucket. Beckel installed the track down alongside cattle mangers. The track is fitted with a two wheeled roller that supports a chain hoist that previously held the manure bucket.

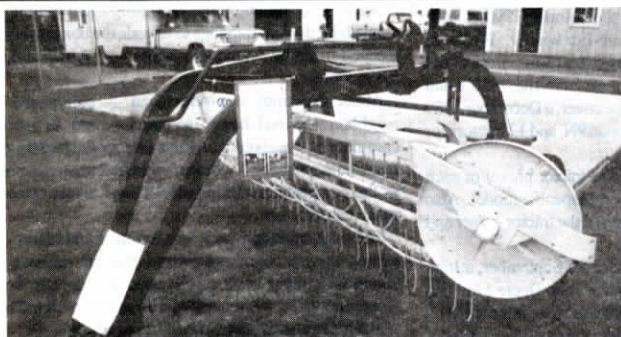
Beckel made a spear out of 1/2 in. dia. steel rod to push through the center of the bale he wants to feed. There's a metal loop at one end of the spear and an old-style hydraulic coupler at the other end. He shoves the end with the coupler into the bale and slips a 2 1/2-ft. long 2 by 6 board through the metal loop so that the board runs across the end of the bale to keep the spear from pulling through. On the opposite end of the spear, which now

sticks out of the other end of the bale, Beckel attaches a short length of pipe fitted with a metal lifting loop on one end and a hydraulic coupler on the other. The coupler on the short pipe is joined with the coupler on the spear. Then chain from the overhead hoist is attached to the loop on the bale spear to lift the bale off the ground.

Once the bale is in the air, he cuts the twines and then hay rolls off the spear like thread on a spool. "It comes off so easily you don't need to cut into the bale at all. Takes just minutes to feed fresh hay to a barnful of cows," says Beckel, who designed the bale unroller for bales of 1,000 lbs. or less. To handle bigger bales he says the track would simply have to be reinforced to handle the extra weight.

Beckel built a 60-ft. bale track in another barn that uses a hay mow track in place of the barn cleaner track. He says it works just as well as the first one he built.

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Right-Handed Hay Rake

Arvin De Cook, Sully, Iowa, converted a left hand rake to a right hand rake which he pulls in tandem with a left hand rake.

"Putting the two rakes together this way causes less hay damage," says De Cook. "Before converting this rake we used a tandem rake hitch, pulling two left hand rakes which moved hay the entire width of the two rakes, or 18 ft. I decided one left hand and one right hand rake would cause less hay damage because hay would never be rolled more than the width of one rake. Finding a used right hand rake was difficult so I converted a

left hand rake to a right hand rake.

"After completely dismantling the rake, I reversed the mounting brackets and baskets by turning everything upside down. I remounted the gearbox on the right hand rake and connected a new driveshaft to it. Then I remounted the teeth and bent their ends in the opposite direction. The only out-of-pocket cost was for the longer drive shaft, bearing, and new paint."

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Harold M. Johnson, Editorial Director



Photo courtesy Marcle Gerriets, Illinois Agri-News

24-Row Cultivator Helps Reduce Soil Compaction

"As far as I know it's the largest commercial row crop cultivator ever built," says "Stony" Adkins, Bath, Ill., who had Orthman Mfg., Lexington, Neb., custom-build a 24-row, 30-in. pull-type cultivator. It can be used in either conventional or no-till.

"It fits into our plans for controlling wheel traffic to reduce soil compaction," says Adkins, who with his son "Rocky" farms 3,250 acres, 700 of it no-till. "We already owned a 24-row planter and rotary hoe. By farming with only 60-ft. wide equipment we make just two wheel tracks out of every 24 rows or every 60 ft. and we use the same tracks every trip through the field. Using wider equipment also allows us to cover more acres with less machinery. We've cut back from four 12-row cultivators to the one 24-row cultivator and a 12-row cultivator which we use only in emergencies. We've also cut back from four Deere 4-WD tractors (two 8630s and two 8640s) to three - a 4850 with front wheel assist and two 4-WDs, a 8640 and 8960." Adkins uses the Deere 8960 to pull the 24-row cultivator. He replaced its fac-

tory tires, which were too wide for 30-in. rows, with narrower tires and moved the wheels in.

The cultivator is equipped with Orthman's automatic guidance system which consists of 6 rear-mounted stabilizer disks and front-mounted "feeler" rods that follow the crop rows. "The system works fine except when there are skips in the rows," says Stony. "We plan to install a V-blade on the planter which will make a groove in the soil for the guidance system to follow. It should increase cultivator accuracy."

Last year Adkins used a 48-ft. wide field cultivator. Next year he'll use a 60-ft. wide field cultivator which Deere is building for him. Adkins' combine is equipped with flotation tires for decreased soil compaction. Adkins harvests with a 12-row soybean head and an 8-row corn head. "Next year we'll switch to a 12-row corn head so we can further confine wheel traffic," notes Adkins.

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