



Nifty Way To House, Feed Calves

Here's an efficient and safe system for housing and feeding a lot of dairy calves.

"We built 88 stalls in a continuous row of individual stalls, each 3 ft., 4 in. wide by 8 ft. long with a 4-ft. overhang over an open front," says Earl Myers of Myers Dairy Farm. "Each two stalls are divided by a 4 by 8-ft. sheet of plywood with a removable gate in front. Each stall has a bucket and feed box attached to the front of it also. The floor under the stalls is concrete with a pad in front. To clean, the front gate and divider are removed and a skid steer loader is used to remove the manure. Plastic garbage containers, which stand in a row on the pad in front of the stalls, are used to store grain that's fed to the calves. Straw is used for bedding.

"We also developed an innovative milk hauling unit. Milk and milk replacer are mixed in a separate building and hauled to the calves in a 3-wheeled cart that consists of three 15-gal. plastic tanks mounted on an angle iron frame. A bank of three valves at the back of the cart - one connected to each 15-gal. tank - makes it easy to fill buckets. A hand agitator keeps the milk mixed.

"After use, buckets are washed by an automatic bucket washer built using wheels off an old hay loader. The one wheel is used as a base on the floor and the other rotates on a short axle and is fitted with brackets around the outer rim, made out of wire and threaded rod, that allow it to hold 18 buckets at a time.



The bucket wheel is driven by a 200 to 1 gear box which is powered by a 1/20 hp. motor. As the wheel rotates, the buckets pass through four spray nozzles of hot water and then through four nozzles of disinfecting solution, which are pumped into the system from a plastic tank by a small electric pump.

"When the wash cycle is completed, the water nozzles shut off automatically and then the rotation and pump also automatically shut off."

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Quick-Change Blade For Rotary Mower

"Keeping a sharp cutting edge on big rotary mower blades saves fuel, time and wear and tear on equipment but it's a hassle to take off blades to sharpen them," says Clyde Williams, Leakesville, Miss., who came up with a quick-change blade for his rotary mower that he can change in seconds with just a hammer.

He notched the end of a mower blade with an angled cutout and a rectangular "key" for his removable blade to fit in to. The blade sets into the notches and wraps around the back side of the non-cutting side of the blade. Then a taper key is knocked under the back side of the removable blade to hold it in place.

"It's foolproof and safe because the taper key just gets tighter when the blade starts turning due to centrifugal force," says Williams, noting that the rectangular notch keeps the blade itself from slipping out of place as the blade turns.



"When the blade gets dull, I just reach in under the mower deck with a hammer, knock the key out, and slip off the blade. You can make up extra blades so that if you hit a rock or other obstacle in the field, you can make a quick change and maintain a sharp cutting edge," says Williams.

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Nighttime Cultivation Stops Weed Seeds From Sprouting

Plowing and cultivating in the middle of the night reduces weed problems, say researchers at Oregon State University.

Crop scientists Carlos Ballare and Ana Scopel explain that millions of weed seeds lie dormant in every field. For many species, all it takes is a millisecond of exposure

to get them to germinate. So, no matter how fast you work in daytime, you can't help triggering the growth of seeds that might otherwise remain harmlessly underground for years.

Ballare and Scopel says their research proves farmers who do nighttime tillage can

reduce weed growth 30 to 70 percent.

You don't have to work in total darkness to make the idea work. The researchers say that comparisons between tractors working in total darkness and tractors with as many as 8 bright headlights showed no difference. It also doesn't matter if it's a full moon or

new moon.

If doing fieldwork at night doesn't work out, you can get nearly the same benefits by covering your implement with a tarp or cardboard to create artificial nighttime at ground level. (Jane Fyksen in Agri-View)

"Best Ideas"

Cheap Way To "Flat-Proof" Tires

Saskatchewan farmer Ben Kambeitz says one of the handiest ideas he ever came up with was a cheap way to "flat-proof" rubber tires on garden tractors, wagons and other equipment around the farm.

"Nearly every spring the tires on our garden tractors would be flat. I looked at buying puncture-proof solutions that you spray into the tires and noticed that the main ingredient in them was ethylene glycol, which is anti-freeze. So I decided to save money and just use plain anti-freeze," says Kambeitz.

At first he tried new anti-freeze but it didn't work. So then, figuring he had nothing to lose, he tried used, rusty-looking anti-freeze. To his surprise, it stopped all leaks.

"I'm not sure why. Maybe the rust and

impurities help plug up holes," he says. He fills each tire about 1/3 full with anti-freeze using an injector he made out of a 3-gal. LP tank. He installed a valve in the side of the tank (making certain to totally purge all gas fumes before cutting into it) that lets him pour in anti-freeze, then he installs a tire stem in the hole so he can inject air to create pressure. He runs a hose out of the top of the tank to run the anti-freeze into the tire (he holds the tank upside down while filling the tire).

Kambeitz says he's only used the idea on smaller, tubeless tires but says it would probably work on bigger ones as well.

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He Sidedresses Nitrogen And Sprays Weeds In One Trip

Pennsylvania farmer Charlie Beaver spot-sprays weeds in corn at the same time he sidedresses liquid nitrogen onto the crop.

His 500-gal. nitrogen tank mounts on a Demco spray chassis along with a 45-ft. boom. Drop lines along the boom lay nitrogen alongside each row when corn plants are 5 to 10 in. tall. A 110 gal. spray tank also mounts on the sprayer chassis along with a second pump and controls. Flat fan nozzles and spray hose run the length of the boom.

As he sidedresses nitrogen onto fields, he spot-sprays Banvel at a rate of about 10 gal. per acre using controls that let him spray with the right, left, or center section of the boom whenever he passes over a patch of weeds. He also keeps a high-quality garden hose nozzle in the cab that's fed by the spray tank. It lets him shoot a stream of herbicide at weeds along fencerows without getting off the tractor. (Pennsylvania Farmer)

Mower Replaces Tandem Disk

Chopping up crop residue with a 20-ft. rotary mower eliminates the need to disk small grain acreage in the fall, says Alberta grain farmer Harry Krawchuk.

He got the idea by observing corn farmers who regularly chop stalks. He decided to try the same approach on his 2,260 acres of small grains. He bought a 20-ft. wide Gyro mower for \$13,500 which he can pull with a 100 hp. tractor at speeds of 8 mph. In

the past, he disked the fields in the fall with a \$30,000 tandem disk pulled by a 300 hp. tractor.

He mows all stubble to a 4 or 5-in. height, providing good cover to prevent wind and water erosion but yet light enough to keep from plugging his field cultivator and seeder in the spring. He can also easily leave stubble strips to trap snow, if needed. (Farm Forum, Calgary, Alberta)