

Is The Time Right For Machinery Rings?

High prices for new machinery have aroused interest among farm groups all over the world in machinery rings, a European concept that got started in the early 1960's.

Rings use "organized contracting" to match up farmers within a certain geographic area - typically a 12 1/2 mile radius - with other farmers who have extra machinery capacity or have work that needs to be done.

Rings help everyone involved. Farmers can use capital that might have been tied up in machinery for land purchases, for example. Likewise, farmers with the latest machinery get a little added return on their investment by contracting with ring members.

Rings employ a full or part-time organizer, who works with a management board to coordinate the demand for work with the people who are going to supply the services. Requests for help, which can range from tillage to planting to harvesting, must be made at least three months in advance.

The owner of the machine will do work for another farmer and when the work has been completed to a satisfactory standard,

the ring organizer sends an account to the person who has had the service done. Payment is expected within 10 days.

The organizer, who's hired on a full- or part-time basis depending on size of the ring (one in Holland has 1,000 members; one in West Germany, 300), takes a small percentage of the money he handles. This, along with ring membership fees, pays his salary, plus office, telephone and transportation expenses.

Membership fees relate to the size of a member's business, either on an acreage basis or any other method which is agreed to by the members.

The system has spread from Bavaria to Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Japan and Luxembourg. The number of functions the rings perform has grown, too. For example, a Holland ring provides a form of health insurance and allows farm operators to get away for a vacation.

Usually rings have excess capacity to most of the work. And they can even provide backup in case of a break-down that can't be repaired within a day. (From **Farming Ahead**).

How To Keep Grain From Sticking To Bin Floor

"We've discovered that if we cover the floor of grain bins with insulation, we can keep grain from sticking to the concrete floor," says Matthew Hempel, Eldridge, Mo.

"We have a 3,000 bu. bin with a concrete floor. We covered the entire floor with 3/4-in. construction-type cellulose insulation with foil on both sides ("Tuff R" is one name for it) four years ago. It comes in large, flat panels. Our bins now sweep out clean every time we empty out. Even with

the bin full, the weight of the corn does not crush the insulation. It seems like you need at least 3/4-in. insulation. We tried using 1/2-in. and there was a slight mold problem at the bottom.

"The insulation is still in good shape even after four years of use."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Matthew T. Hempel, Semper Fidelis Ranch, Rt. 1, Box 52, Eldridge, Mo. 65463 (ph 314 363-5213).

Easy Way To Keep Drain Tile Open

"I have a 150-ft. long 4-in. drain tile that runs out from my milkhouse. I keep a garden hose in the tile year round so if it should ever freeze up I just run hot water through the hose for a few minutes and it opens up pretty soon so I can run hot water down the tile," says John L. Miller, Howard City, Mich.

"The drain froze up twice last winter when we had below zero weather for over a month, sometimes as low as 35° below zero. In a few minutes, the drain was working again.

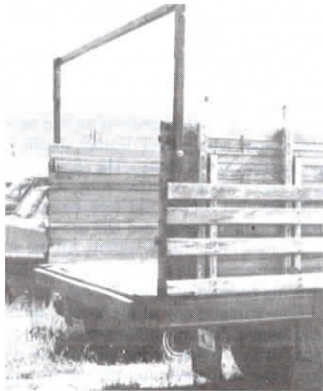
"Here's how I put the hose through the tile. While the drain was open, I floated a kite string on a cork down the tile. When it reached the other end, I tied baler twine onto the string and pulled it back through so I would have something strong enough to pull the hose through. I have the female end up at the milkhouse so I can connect hot water to it."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, John L. Miller, Rt. 2, Church St., Howard City, Mich. 49329.

Stiffen Up Old Truck Boxes

Here's an easy way to stiffen up wobbly sides on old truck or wagon boxes. Maintenance men at the University of Wyoming beef station came up with the idea.

They simply make a metal arch up over the rear of the bed using channel iron or tube steel. The base of each side of the frame is welded to pieces of steel plate, which are bolted to the truck frame. The frame bolts to the truck sides and then extends up high enough to be out of the way of a load or of workers getting into the box. Keeps the sides from spreading under load and stop them from flopping around.



He Increased Combine Capacity 25 Percent

"Last fall when I was combining corn a neighbor was riding along with me in the field. His head just kept going left and right like he was watching a tennis match, counting and recounting the number of rows on my corn head," says Charles Marshall, who replaced the 4-row head on his Deere 6620 combine with a 5-row head he rebuilt by reworking a Deere 643 6-row (30-in.) header.

"I wanted to increase the capacity of my combine and I felt this was the easiest way to go," says Marshall, of Stronghurst, Ill. "I couldn't find a Deere 5-row header and even if I had been able to find one, I didn't feel I could justify the price. I could also have changed from 36-in. rows to 30-in. rows, but I felt it was uneconomical to change planters, cultivators and my corn head. Besides, I like 36-in. rows."

Marshall says harvesting an extra row has boosted combine capacity 25%. "It works better than I'd dreamed," he says. "You can easily gain 10 acres a day."

Plus, the new head saves wear and tear on implement tires since he no longer has to drive on top of rows but can go between them. Also, because he's no longer crushing corn stalks by driving on rows, his beef cows have more stalks to graze on over winter. And he always has a spare header handy in case of a breakdown.

To convert the Deere head, which Marshall bought for \$3,000, to five rows, he first stripped the six snouts and tin off. Then he removed one of the center row units and moved the remaining five row units toward the middle so they'd correspond with his 36-in. rows, centering the units off what became the new center unit. Marshall spread the rows out by bolting



6-in. steel spacer bars onto the header at the top of each row unit.

Because he widened row spacings, Marshall had to stretch one of the head's two drive shafts by 14-in. On the original head, each drive shaft operated three rows. Now the longer drive shaft runs three rows; the original, two rows.

To complete the conversion, Marshall attached new divider snouts he made out of steel tapered from 6-in. in the rear to a point in front.

"The only parts I had to purchase were the shields underneath the row units, which were for 30-in. rows," he says. "I got five shields for 36-in. rows for \$20 from a salvage yard."

Including replacing worn gathering chains and snap rollers with new ones, converting the head took about two days, Marshall says. It cost about \$200 in parts and materials.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Charles Marshall, Box 137, Stronghurst, Ill. 61480 (ph 309-924-1155).

This Wood Stove Burns Gas

Michigan farmer Ralph Johnson bought a state-of-the-art wood stove a few years ago to heat his older farm house. Even though it was equipped with a catalytic converter to make it function more efficiently, he says he found wood burning to be time-consuming and expensive.

So he decided to convert the stove to burn gas and says it was one of the best decisions he's ever made.

"We put a gas log fireplace unit in it and ran a gas line to it (you can see the gas line on left side of stove in photo). This stove now heats our entire house with almost no maintenance required. We set up a box fan behind the stove to help circulate heat through the house.

"It costs only about \$60 a month to heat our house, even in the coldest part of winter. We only use our regular furnace in zero



degree weather or colder."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ralph Johnson, H120 Pettis, Ada, Mich. 49301.

Safer Way To "Jump-Start" Tractors

"Anyone who stands on the ground beside a tractor while jump-starting it across the solenoid - no matter what model - should consider making the following modifications to their tractor," says R.D. Fricker, Devils Bluff, Ark.

Go to a Radio Shack store (or someplace similar) and buy the following items:

- 1 - N.O. (normally open) push button switch, any type
- 1 - mounting bracket
- 1 - roll of 18-ga. wire, or lamp cord
- 2 - terminals to fit switch (crimp)
- 1 - 1/2-in. ring terminal (crimp)
- 1 - #8 spade terminal (crimp)
- 1 - short piece of rubber hose, or grommet

"Unhook battery. Mount push-button switch in an easy-to-get place on console (weather-proof it if on an open tractor). If

tractor has a cab, drill a hole in the cab wall above the clutch. Insert rubber hose or grommet in hole and feed wires through. Attach wires to push button switch. Attach eye ring to the end of one wire. Mount ring on big post of solenoid behind battery cable. Other wire gets a #8 spade. It fits behind smaller terminal marked "S" with wire already attached.

"This gives a remote starter button that lets you 'jump-start' the tractor safely. My Deere 4620 has a neutral switch that sometimes works, sometimes doesn't. Make sure you use a 'normally open' switch so that when you push it, it makes contact," says Fricker.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, R.D. Fricker, Rt. 1 Box 81-B, Devils Bluff, Ark. 72041.