Ranches Use Camels To Control Weeds, Brush

If you've got a pesky thistle patch you just can't get rid of, you might be interested in what ranchers are doing in a few Southern Plains states to control weeds and brush on pasture land.

"We imported a few dromedary (one hump) camels from Australia in 1989 to see if they would clean up brush," explains Keith Meyer, executive manager of Hudson Ranches, based in Topeka, Kan. "It worked so well we now have 40 camels on seven ranches in Missouri, Kansas and Texas. They're 90% effective on woody weeds such as thistle and ragweed and/or brush including sprouting mesquite trees. They do as good a job as chemicals and are easy to care for, requiring no more work than a big cow. They eat the same things as beef cattle - hay, cracked corn and dehydrated alfalfa pellets. They're easy to train, learning to move from one pasture to another faster than cattle."

Camels are difficult to domesticate unless bottle-fed from birth. And an isolated camel won't move by itself so they always have to be handled in groups.

Still, they come naturally equipped for brush and weed control. An extremely tough lining in their mouths allows them to chow down on stems of brush and woody weeds.

Besides controlling weeds and brush, the camels may provide an additional benefit around the ranch. Predators like coyotes haven't been a problem since they arrived at one of the Texas ranches.

Photo courtesy Wings & Hooves

Camels control 90% of weeds, brush.

That might be because of their formidable size - adults stand 6 to 7 ft. high at the shoulder and weigh from 600 to 1,500 lbs. It might also be their 34 big sharp teeth and their often ornery disposition.

Camels have long, matted coats during the winter and spring. Hair on their humps and heads sheds in hot weather. They have been clocked at speeds of over 40 mph when in pursuit. They live to be about 40 years of age. Gestation period is 370 to 440 days.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Keith Meyer, Hudson Ranches, 1200 Bank IV Tower, Topeka, Kan. 66603.

Furrow Splitter Improves Performance Of Moldboard Plow

A stand-up "tooth" welded just behind the leading edge of a moldboard plow slices up furrows, providing additional tillage at a minimal cost, according to the British company that came up with the idea.

Cost of fitting the "furrow splitters" to a 4-bottom plow is about $35. The inventor was a farmer named Ken Matthews who told the English farm magazine "Farmer's Weekly" that the idea is not new. But other designs, he says, have worked from the top, not from underneath so the sliced-up furrow gets buried.

"The beauty of this add-on device is that it's simple, quick to fit and does a job similar to much more expensive equipment." Matthews licensed the idea to Spaldings Ltd. which sold over 6,000 units in the first 1 1/2 months and is receiving over 100 new orders a day as word spreads.

Matthews says the splitter can be fitted to 6 moldboards in a half hour or less. It comes with a template that clamps to the plow wing to position the splitter, which is spot welded into place. After removing the template, you then run a complete bead around the base of the splitter.

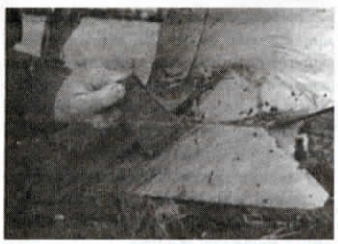

Photo courtesy Farmer's Weekly

Unlike other designs, furrow splitter works from underneath to bury sliced furrow.

One of the biggest advantages of the splitter, according to Matthews, is that it provides increased tillage - particularly in heavy soils - yet still leaves the furrow open for weathering, unlike a pull-behind furrow press, which levels out plowed ground but closes up the furrows.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Spaldings, Ltd., Sandler Road, Lincoln LN6 3XJ England (ph 0522 500600; fax 0522 500173).

"Sun Block" Prolongs Implement Tire Life

"I was just sitting around one day with an old piece of inner tube when the idea struck me," says David Reinhardt, Hinsdale, Mont., about the "sun blocks" he makes for implement tires.

"I can really tell the difference in how much longer tires last when compared to implements stored outside without any sun protection," Reinhardt says. "I don't think a tire will ever wear out if you cover it up."

Reinhardt simply cuts inner tubes from rear tractor tires into 3 1/2-ft. sections with a tin snips, then lays the sections of inner tube over the tires on disks, planters and any other implements that sit outside.

"Those tubes are pretty heavy and they don't blow away, so you don't have to fasten them down," he notes.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, David Reinhardt, Box 446, Hinsdale, Mont. 59241 (ph 406 364-2394).

Flood-proof fence made out of 55-gal. detergent drums keeps fence intact.

Floating Fence Takes Headache Out Of Spring Flooding

If you've got low-lying pastureland that floods every spring, you'll like the flood-proof floating fence a Mississippi cattleman came up with.

"Flood waters don't tear out my fence anymore," says Wayman Sowell of Canton, Miss. "Before I put this up, the water and trash from my upland cotton, corn and soybean fields would tear out my line fence below at least twice a year. This saves a lot of headaches."

Sowell and his son, Terry, came up with the system two years ago. They were aiming to protect barbed wire fence in a flood-prone 75-acre paddock used in their 200-acre rotational grazing system.

The heart of the system consists of a row of 55-gal. plastic drums that industrial detergent comes in. Sowell got 75 of the 32-in. long drums for $5 apiece from a local chicken processing plant.

"I used some 2 1/2-in. dia. oil well drill stem for posts, setting them deep and spaced four drums apart," he says. "I welded 7/8 in. dia. sucker rod horizontally across the tops of the 'posts' and suspended the drums end-to-end 8 in. off the ground from the sucker rod with chains. Chains fasten in holes I drilled in the top of each drum. I drilled holes in the bottom of the drum and attached a strand of 12 ga. barbed wire to the bottom by looping wires through the holes.

"Now, whenever it floods, the drums float up with the water so my fence doesn't wash out."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Wayman Sowell, Hwy. 22 West, Canton, Miss. 39046 (ph 601-859-1816).

Tractor Converted To Hydrostatic Transmission

Here's an idea from "down under" that may be of interest to any farmer with similar problems.

Alan Smith from Mintaro, South Australia, is a custom hay contractor who makes about 8,000 big round bales a year for customers. The problem was that he had to replace at least one clutch a year on his Chamberlain C6100 tractor which pulls the baler (Chamberlain is the name Deere tractors are sold under in Australia).

Alan finally decided he could solve his problems by replacing the conventional transmission in his tractor with a hydrostatic one.

Fortunately, he says, the tractor was constructed with a separate sub frame so he could remove the entire transmission (in other words, the transmission was not part of the tractor's support structure).

The second stage of the conversion was to couple a Rexroth hydrostatic pump directly to the engine flywheel. He had to use a large enough pump to match the 3,000 rpm speed of the input shaft into the rear 3-speed gearbox. The pump powers a fixed displacement hydrostatic motor that's fitted directly to the rear gearbox.

The conversion gave him infinitely variable speeds within three speed ranges, whether moving in forward or reverse. A single hydraulic lever controls speed within each range. Maximum speed in the low range is about 7 mph; maximum speed in mid-range is about 14 mph; and maximum speed in high range is about 32 mph.

Due to the size and capacity of the pump, Smith had to install a larger cooling system. A 25-gal. oil reservoir mounts on the side of the tractor while an oil cooler and fan, powered directly off the crankshaft, were mounted on the front left side of the tractor.

Smith eliminated clutch problems by replacing existing transmission with hydrostatic pump coupled directly to engine flywheel.

With the main transmission gone, there was no pto drive so Smith mounted a triple pulley on the back of the hydraulic pump which belt-drives a new shaft that runs back to the original pto drive. The cost of the modification was about $12,000. Smith claims the converted tractor is superior even to tractors with the latest model transmissions since the hydrostatic transmission gives him infinitely variable speeds in either direction. When he ran in a test against a conventional tractor pulling the same model baler, he was able to make 50 percent more bales in the same amount of time.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Alan Smith, Mintaro, South Australia, Australia.