



Elwin Harder spent less than \$100 to make this ditcher out of a Gehl silage blower.

## Silage Blower Makes Inexpensive Ditcher

By Mick Lane

Draining water from his flat, Kansas farm fields is no longer a problem for Elwin Harder.

The Newton, Kansas, wheat and row-crop farmer ditches fields prior to planting with a 3-point mounted ditcher that he made out of an old silage blower. Vol. 24, No. 2, 2000 "It was a pretty simple machine to make," he says.

"Basically, all I did was cut the bottom out of a Gehl High Throw silage blower that I bought for \$75 at a sale."



He cut off about a third of the blower and then built a heavy angle iron frame around it. Blower fan digs a shallow ditch about 20 in. wide and 5 to 6 in. deep at center.

He cut off about a third of the blower and then built a heavy angle iron frame around it. The blower was pto-driven, but he had to shorten the shaft. In total, Elwin figures he spent less than \$100 in materials to make the ditcher.

Mounted behind the tractor, the blower fan digs a shallow ditch about 20 in. wide and 5 to 6 in. deep at the center. Unlike a trencher, it throws the soil and scatters it over about 100 ft., so there's no ridge along the ditch.

"It seems to work best if we ditch the field before we plant. The ditches aren't deep enough to slow us down much with the planter, and we can plant right over them," Elwin says.

While the ditcher doesn't dig deeply, Elwin says it makes a big difference in the way water runs off a field. "It's just deep enough to carry off excess water, so water doesn't stand on the field," he says.

Elwin uses his ditcher on an 80 hp tractor. "We can move about 2 1/2 mph with it when we're going 5 to 6 in. deep. Even at that speed, though, it doesn't take long to ditch a field. Deciding where to dig takes more time than ditching. Usually, we'll put a main ditch through a low spot and then make a few shorter branches off of that," he explains.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Elwin Harder, 720 S. Woodlawn Rd., Newton, Kan. 67114 (ph 316 283-1759).



Eight-sided calf catcher - really a miniature portable corral - mounts on the arms of Jeffries's front-end loader.

## Tractor-Mounted Calf Catcher Makes Handling Calves Safe, Easy

Larry Jeffries, Horse Cave, Ky., figured he needed a better way to handle new calves if he was going to stay in the cattle business.

"A year ago, I was tagging a new calf and the mother attacked me. Usually, if a cow knocks you down, that's the end of it. But this one knocked me down and then stomped me twice. I couldn't get out of her way. I figured she was going to kill me but the calf bawled and ran off and she finally followed it," he recalls.

Last winter, Jeffries put together an eight-sided calf catcher that mounts on the arms of his tractor's front-end loader. The catcher is really a miniature portable corral. It's 10 ft. across and 54 in. high, constructed of 1-in. and 2-in. round steel tubing and lined with steel fence panels.

To make the catcher, Jeffries bent 20-ft. lengths of 2-in. tubing so that two pieces laid together made an octagon. Using three lengths of tubing, one at the top, one in the center and one at bottom, he welded lengths of 1-in. tubing between them to reinforce and space the sides to a height of 54 in. Then he bent and welded the horse fence panels to the inside.

"I made it 54 in. high for a couple of reasons," Jeffries says. "I looked at steel fence panels and the ones they sold as horse panels were that height, so I made it match them. It's high enough that the cow won't try to get in, but not too high to handle."

Once he had the two sides of the hexagon put together, he welded a length of 1/4-in. angle iron at each end. Four bolts through each pair of angle irons hold it together. He can disassemble it by just removing eight bolts.

He installed a portable arm that hangs over the inside of the catcher about 20 in., with a length of chain and a scale so he can weigh baby calves while he's processing them.

Inside the catcher along one side, he built a smaller rectangular shaped pen just big enough for the calf.

"If I need to take the calf and cow out of



Jeffries weighs baby calves on a weigh scale inside corral.

the pasture, I can put the calf in the pen and then slowly move it along and the cow will follow," he says.

He also cut and hinged a 30-in. wide section of the catcher panel to make a door so he could get in and out more easily. Jeffries says the door also allows him to load animals into a trailer or truck.

He can catch more than just calves with it, too. "I recently used it to catch a mature cow that had come up lame. I haltered her and cleaned her foot," he says. And he's used it to catch her again to check the foot.

Making the brackets so it would fit the loader arms on his tractor wasn't that difficult, he says. "I bought some square tubing and split it open enough to get arms from the end loader to fit. Then I welded the tubing to the catcher."

The catcher cost Jeffries under \$900 to put together.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Larry Jeffries, Santa Gertrudis Farm, 1825 R. Mitchell Road, Horse Cave, Ky. 42749 (ph 270 565-2132).



Calf rides inside rectangular shaped pen along one side of calf catcher.

Vol. 24, No. 4, 2000

Harold M. Johnson  
Founder & Publisher Emeritus

Editor/Publisher - Mark Newhall  
Associate Editor - Bill Gergen  
Office Manager - Anne Lash  
Circulation Manager - Nora Petree  
Circulation - Marcy Isaacson

**FARM SHOW** (ISSN #01634518) is published bimonthly (6 times a year) for \$17.95 per year (\$25.95 in Canada and foreign countries) by Farm Show Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 1029, 20088 Kenwood Trail, Lakeville, Minn. 55044. Periodicals postage paid at Lakeville, Minn., and Shakopee, Minn. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 952 469-5572; fax 952 469-5575). E-Mail: Editor @ F A R M S H O W . c o m . W e b s i t e : www.FARMSHOW.com. Single copy price is \$4.50 (\$5.50 in Canada). Publication No. 469490 GST No. 131272023 Publication Agreement #1489445

**FARM SHOW** does not accept advertising and focuses exclusively on new products and product evaluations.

**FARM SHOW** does not charge for new products or services featured in the magazine. Anyone with a new product or service of interest to farmers - whether inventor, manufacturer, marketer, distributor or whatever - is invited to contact FARM SHOW regarding possible publication.

**AS A SERVICE TO READERS.** FARM SHOW publishes newsworthy products and ideas. Because of possible variance in the quality and condition of materials and workmanship, FARM SHOW cannot assume responsibility of proper application of techniques, or proper and safe functioning of manufactured or reader-built projects resulting from information published in this magazine. FARM SHOW attempts to verify product claims in editorial reports and adheres to rigid standards. However, the publisher assumes no liability for accuracy and validity of claims.

Printed in U.S.A. All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, without written permission.

July-August, 2000