



Multiple self-locking headgates cover holes cut into side of bus. After driving out to pasture, Kerr dumps grain onto floor in front of each headgate to catch cows.

Cow-Catching Bus Makes Working Cattle Easier

By Janis Schole

The combination of an old school bus and some self-locking headgates has made summer cattle management a whole lot easier for Harrowsmith, Ontario farmer Dave Kerr.

When cattle are being grazed on fields without adequate catch pen facilities, it can be very difficult to provide veterinary care or perform artificial insemination, but with a little imagination, Kerr has found a way around that.

By putting in only about 18 hours of labor, Kerr found a way to easily catch cattle on pasture. Multiple headgates, which cover holes cut into the side of a bus, created a simple way to immobilize cattle.

After driving out to the pasture, Kerr dumps a bit of grain onto the floor in front of each headgate. Within a very short time, the cows push their heads through the self-locking headgates to eat the grain, and are caught. At this point, Kerr can treat sick animals, administer vaccination booster shots, do pregnancy checking, or perform artificial insemination.

He suggests that, for cattle that are less docile than his, it would be a good idea to first get the animals "hooked" on the occasional grain snack by offering it to them on the ground near the bus.

"I find this system extremely handy for pasture breeding," says Kerr, who has about 40 fullblood Braunvieh cows. He sells bulls to Mexico. "I have also been in the school bus business for 30 years, and have accumulated some surplus buses that are now off the road. There's very little wrong with them, so I can't see them go to waste. The bus I used has a 32-foot long box. I removed the seats and then cut out two 30-inch deep holes along the side length of the bus - one behind the back wheels and another in the middle, between the two sets of wheels. I left an upright structural brace in place every four feet, for strength."

He says the length of the holes is dependent on the size of the bus being worked on and the number of headgates desired. Although any style of self-locking headgate could be

used, Kerr used a commercially available style that comes with five inter-connected headgates per panel. He removed two from one panel and added them to another, to make a seven-headgate section that fits over the longer mid-section hole in the bus. The remaining three-headgate section fits over the smaller "back" hole.

The headgates feature a "double-locking head hole," that Kerr says is necessary in case an animal goes down for any reason. Before a cow is captured, she puts her head in an angled, v-shaped headgate opening. As she lowers her head to eat the grain, her neck applies pressure on the bottom of the angled "swing-bar." This bar straightens into a vertical, locked position and "catches" her. If she falls down for any reason, the swing-bar can be unlocked so that it falls in the opposite direction. This leaves a wider opening at the bottom of the head hole and the cow can regain control of her head and be released.

The headgates Kerr is using allow him to release animals either individually, or all at once, by accessing a handle on the panel's end corner, which turns the locking bar.

He bolted the bottoms of the panels tightly onto the side of the bus with U-clamps and then bolted the top of the panels to an extension bar he had welded to the bus every two feet. The bar is located just under the windows, and it holds the top of the headgate panel out about eight inches away from the side of the bus.

"This angle helps lock the cattle in quicker," he says. "I plan to install headgates on the other side of the bus as well, and this would give me the ability to catch 20 head at one time."

The bus is worth \$1,500 and the headgates cost him \$700, Kerr says. He notes that he has extra buses for sale that are in good condition.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dave Kerr, R.R. 1, Harrowsmith, Ontario, Canada K0H 1V0 (ph/fax 613 372-2215).



T.C. Mallett says the "sun roof" he built for his 4-wheel ATV provides great protection from the hot Texas sun. Note homemade back seat rest on spray tank.

He Made A "Sun Roof" For His ATV

"It provides great protection from the hot mid day sun and cost only about \$20 to build," says T.C. Mallett, Austin, Texas, about the sun roof that he built for his Honda 4-wheeler ATV.

The sun roof is as wide as the ATV and provides 12 to 14 in. of head room above the operator when he's seated. Mallett used schedule 40 PVC to make an upright frame that bolts onto the front and rear racks on the ATV. The frame is covered with a close-weave fiberglass shade cloth. The upright pieces have thin metal tubing inside them to add rigidity. Cross braces about 14 in. down from the top give the frame added strength.

To attach the front uprights, he made a U-shaped groove in the bottom of the uprights so they slip over the ATV rack. A small pin keeps each upright in place. On back he attached a pair of PVC "tees" to the ATV rack and greased them inside, then dropped the uprights into them. He also bolted a U-clamp onto each side to make the rear part of the frame more stable.

"It works great and was quick and simple to build," says Mallett. "I got the idea from looking at golf carts. I got the cloth from a friend for free, but almost any cloth or even an inexpensive tarp would work. It takes only three to five minutes to remove the entire rack."

Mallett often uses his ATV as a sprayer and mounts a 25-gal. spray tank behind the seat. The problem is that while he's bouncing around on the ATV in the field, his back gets sore from resting it against the hard plastic



"Sun roof" is made from a PVC frame covered by a close-weave fiberglass cloth. tank and from having no support.

To solve the problem he bought a 12-in. high lumbar support cushion from Sam's Club for \$15 and attached it to the tank. The lumbar support cushion is attached to the tank with two snaps that fit into small receptacles that were already molded into the tank. He used four snaps to attach a strip of aluminum to the back of the cushion. As a result, when the cushion is attached to the tank there are just two snaps to attach.

"It has proven to be a lifesaver for my back," says Mallett. "I unsnap the cushion from the tank whenever I want to clean it or to avoid getting chemicals or water on it."

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