



Dobbs simply parks modified school bus in pasture. When area gets grazed out, he drives to a new location.

## Mobile Chicken Coop Easy To Move From Pasture To Pasture

If you've ever thought about raising a few "free range" chickens to sell to local food markets but didn't like the work involved in using portable chicken coops, you might like this idea from Ohio farmer Mark Dobbs. He made a mobile chicken coop out of a school bus.

He removed all the seats in the bus and built a wood wall right behind the driver's seat. Then he built 20 nests in the front half of the bus. They run from floor to ceiling. Behind the nests he mounted three tiers of wooden perches for roosting at night. A narrow alley runs down the middle of the bus. Chickens enter and exit on a wide wood ramp at the back of the bus. Capacity is 250 hens.

"It's a simple system that's so unusual it actually helps draw attention to our business," notes Dobbs. "We raise chickens and ducks and sell all our products 60 miles away in the Cincinnati area. We don't drive the bus over the road. However, we do show potential customers photos of it. They get a kick out of the idea of 'educated hens'."

"If we hadn't used the bus we probably would have built a skid-mounted structure or built a box on top of a wagon running gear. But it was a lot easier just to convert the bus.

"We let the hens out in the morning to feed. When they come back at night to roost we close the doors. A large Pyrenees dog stays with the hens, who range out about 200 ft. or so. We move the bus periodically when the grass gets scratched out. During the summer



Seats were replaced by nests and roosts that run from floor to ceiling.

the chickens lay in the shade under the bus. "We use the alleyway to collect eggs. Manure is simply scraped out the back. We put wood shavings on the floor to keep everything dry. During the summer we put the windows down for ventilation. The partitioned-off area next to the driver serves as a storage area to keep feed, grit, and other supplies."

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Hens range out about 200 ft. or so from bus. A Pyrenees guard dog keeps an eye on them.



Pivoting frame bolts to side of tractor frame. A single hydraulic cylinder lifts "stalk stompers" up when they're not needed.

## Tractor-Mounted "Stalk Stomper" Saves Tires

After losing two sets of tractor tires to corn stalk wear in less than 200 hours, Dick Swank of West Point, Indiana, decided he had to find a way to eliminate the problem. He came up with a "stalk stomper" attachment that mounts on front of the tractor.

The patent pending device knocks stalks down before tractor tires reach them.

The device consists of a hinged pipe that runs across the front of the tractor. The pipe is fitted with a series of 3-in. wide channel irons that angle back down toward the tires. Two sets of 2 by 3-in. angle irons are suspended by chains from the channel irons and run the width of the tires. The angle irons ride right on the ground and simply bend the stalks forward so that they point away from the tires. The pipe is rotated by a single 4-in. dia. hydraulic cylinder to raise or lower the angle irons.

Swank, along with Marvin Moffett and Scott Miller, have formed a company and plan to manufacture the unit. Deere Co. has expressed interest in it.

"It solved my tire problems - I couldn't be happier with it," says Swank. "I used it last spring and fall on more than 3,000 acres and

noticed far less wear on the tires than before. The problem started when I bought a new tractor with dual wheels, and the Firestone tires wore through after only about 60 hours of use. The tires cost about \$2,500 apiece. The company replaced the tires under warranty but the new ones wore out right away again. Firestone replaced them again but said I'd have to come up with something on front of the tractor to reduce wear. I couldn't find anything on the market.

"I think the tires made today are softer because tire manufacturers are developing wider tires with less air pressure to reduce soil compaction. The unit bolts on using existing holes in the tractor frame. It takes only about 20 minutes to remove the unit."

The company plans to manufacture the "Stalk Director", as they call it, and will exhibit it at the Farm Progress Show next fall in Indiana. Swank estimates it will sell for about \$2,500.

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## Extra Step Makes Access Easier

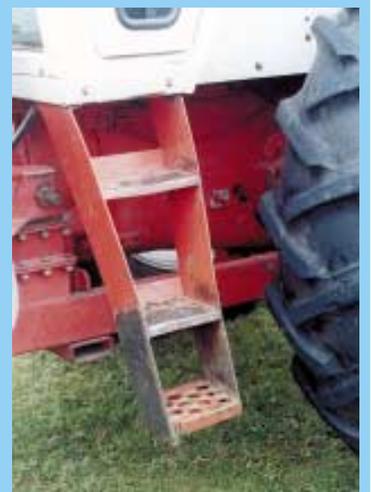
Any modification that makes farms work easier, regardless of how simple, is welcome on Dan Capiuk's Barrhead, Alberta farm.

Like any farmer, he's in and out of his tractor cab a lot and it occurred to him that having to stretch and lift his leg up so high each and every time he climbed up the steps was an unnecessary drain of energy.

To combat the problem, he removed a piece of the step from another tractor in the scrap yard, found some flat iron he used for side plates, and added one more step at the bottom of his existing tractor steps.

"It just makes for easier access," Capiuk says. "It does limit where you can drive with the tractor, though, because the bottom step is only about one and a half feet off the ground. This wasn't a problem for me though, because I wasn't using this tractor for the kind of jobs where the ground is too uneven."

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Capiuk added one extra step to the bottom of the existing steps on his tractor.