



High-flotation broadcast spreader is equipped with four flotation tires which keep spreader from doglegging on hillsides.

Spreader Ideal for Wet Soil Seeding

Dave Herd thinks his Wet Land Wonder will be a hot product this spring due to all the rain and snow the Midwest has received this winter. There will be a lot of wet fields come spring and that's where his new high-flotation broadcast spreader can help. Its 750-lb., 9.6-bu. hopper can be used to broadcast everything from soybeans to brome grass and clover as well as any type of dry fertilizer.

Designed to be pulled by an ATV, the spinner-spreader is powered by a Honda motor mounted on front of the four-wheel trailer.

The rig has a 28-ft. spread with clover and a 36-ft. spread with fertilizer. Herd says the four-wheel flotation tires keep the spreader from doglegging on hillsides and won't put pressure on the ATV hitch like a two-wheel trailer does. Suggested list price from Herd Seeder Co. is \$4,175.

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Solar-powered feeder has sliding side panels that open and close via a timer, allowing you to control how long your horses have access to feed.

Solar-Powered Horse Feeder Opens And Closes On Timer

You can keep horses on a regular feeding schedule whether you're home or not with a new solar-powered feeder with sliding side panels.

The all-steel patented unit has a multi-function timer that allows you to control how long your horses have access to feed. A 12-volt timer opens and closes the sliding panels on all four sides. Any number of feeding times can be programmed in. "Since the horse is a grazing animal, it's recommended that they feed several times a day, rather than once, for optimal health," says Cliff Kester of Besler Industries Inc. "When this feeder is open, the horses can feed from all four sides, providing ample room for up to 16 animals at once."

The sliding panels are chain-driven and it takes about 40 to 50 seconds to raise or lower them, so horses have ample time to get their heads out. There's also a 12-in. flexible section under the roof that allows them to pull out if they do get caught.

When the panels are closed, livestock have no access to the hay, and the feeder is

completely sheltered from all weather by the vinyl tarp roof. Hay waste is reduced since the horses will stand around and eat anything that's on the ground once the panels are closed.

Two sides of the feeder swing out for easy loading with a tractor.

"Feeding the large bales is cheaper than small square bales. This feeder lets you conveniently give access as often as you want without worrying about waste or over feeding," Kester says. "We will also soon have a rectangular model especially for big square bales."

The feeder is on skids so it can be towed to various locations. It sells for \$2,959 plus shipping. A custom printed tarp and a weather vane are available options.

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His Dairy Cows Love Living On "Compost"

By Dee Goerge

If you want clean, contented cows, try putting them on compost.

Just take a thick layer of sawdust, add cattle urine and manure, and stir twice daily.

"It's just an ideal environment for cows," says Minnesota Extension Educator Vince Crary about "compost pack" dairy barns that have a layer of compost on the floor rather than rubber mats, sand, or other such materials.

"It's a lot less work than cleaning stalls," says Kevin Goeden, Wadena, Minn., who recently remodeled his old tie stall barn into a milking parlor and built a 48 by 128 ft. loafing shed next to it. The floor of the shed is covered by a layer of compost. He spends 10 minutes twice a day on his skid steer stirring it up.

The stirring is what separates the compost pack idea from the traditional use of litter. The manure and urine mixed in with the bedding raise the temperature and make the compost work, killing bacteria and breaking the material down. When litter is added, it's okay to miss a stirring or two, but after that, stirring twice a day is crucial. Good ventilation is also important to keep the bedding dry to prevent bacteria from growing on the surface. Goeden's shed, for example, has 16-ft. walls. The bottom 4 ft. is made of treated lumber. The top section has clear curtains that can be opened or closed, and the roof has a 12-in. peak opening.

While rice hulls and other litter materials may work, sawdust seems to be the best material so far, according to University of Minnesota studies. It heats up faster and is easier to stir. Goeden tried chopped straw, but it kept

plugging his digger — a tool attached to the front of his skid steer that he made by welding cultivator tines to a frame.

To start, a 1-ft. deep layer of material is spread on the floor. More is added as needed. Goeden adds a semi-load about every two weeks for his 80 cows, when he notices that they seem dirtier. The size of the building and number of cows determines how often sawdust should be added.

Cleaning schedules also vary from operation to operation. Goeden plans to clean out his shed spring and fall. The compost will be spread on crop fields for fertilizer. Other producers clean their sheds once a year.

During the summer, Goeden puts his cows in paddock pastures, but they will also be able to get into the building for shade. He'll open the curtains for good ventilation and add fans if necessary.

Comfortable and clean cows are the main benefits of the system. Because of that and reduced stress levels, U of M reports suggest that Somatic Cell Count levels may drop. The soft floor also has obvious comfort benefits for cows' legs, and there are fewer lameness problems. Many people say that compost bedded barns smell better than most barns.

The pack also seems to be warmer. Goeden explains that he finished his shed late in the year, around Christmas. It took awhile for the bedding to begin composting and he had some problems with freezing. As he kept stirring it and areas thawed out, he observed how the cows crowded in certain areas to lay down. Eventually the whole floor began composting and the cows spread out. On cold days steam rises from areas where cattle are



"Compost pack" dairy barns have a layer of compost on the floor rather than rubber mats, sand, or other similar materials.

moving.

Goeden recommends starting the compost bed a couple of months before freezing weather begins.

After just a few months with his new barn, Goeden is pleased with the results.

He's milking more cows in the same or less time. Chores are faster. His cows are cleaner. The new building was less expensive than conventional loafing sheds, and if he ever gets out of dairy it will convert easily to another use.

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Goeden spends about 10 minutes twice a day on his skid steer loader stirring compost up.