

“Red Eye” Water Level Indicator

“It’s a failsafe way to check the water level in my stock tank,” says cattleman Mark Katzenmeyer, Florence, Texas, about his homemade water level indicator.

He uses it in a tank located next to a cattle panel fence that has a railing on top. It consists of a float made from a 1-quart plastic Gatorade bottle with a 3/4-in. dia. pipe attached to it that is free to ride up or down inside a pair of 1-ft. long, 1 1/2-in. dia. pipes spaced 2 ft. apart that are zip tied to the fence. The 3/4-in. dia. pipe has a red cap on top of it that’s visible from a county road 1/4-mile away. As the float goes down, the red cap goes down with it. If the red cap disappears below the top of the fence, Katzenmeyer knows there’s something wrong.

“I can drive down the road and tell by looking for the red cap where the water level is,” says Katzenmeyer. “As long as I can see the red cap above the fence, I know there’s plenty of water in the tank. But if the red cap drops I know there’s a pump problem.”

The bottom end of the 3/4-in. dia. pipe is capped and fits inside the neck of the Gatorade bottle. Silicone keeps water from leaking inside the bottle.

The float is protected by a small wire enclosure to keep cattle from bothering it.

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Float attaches to pipe with red cap on top. If the cap drops below the top of fence, Katzenmeyer knows there’s something wrong.

Silage Chopper Converted Into Low-Cost Wood Chipper

“It’ll handle branches up to 3 in. in diameter and does a beautiful job,” says Lloyd Litchy, Plymouth, Minn., who converted an old Gehl stationary silage chopper into a low-cost wood chipper.

He uses his Simplicity 18 hp garden tractor to belt-drive the stationary unit. “To power the chipper, I simply drive the tractor forward a little in order to tighten the belt. Then I engage the pto clutch,” says Litchy.

The chopper was originally designed to handle ear corn and was equipped with a conveyor and a chain-driven chopper-blower unit, which sent the ground material up into a silo. Litchy stripped away everything except the chopper and replaced the sprockets with pulleys. The chopper was originally equipped with four knives, but Litchy removed two to chop wood.

The chipper is equipped with two chutes, one on top and one on front. “I use the top chute for brush and leaves and the front chute for tree limbs,” says Litchy. “The ground-up material exits at the bottom of the machine.”

The machine can be fitted with a variety of screens from large to small. “The small screen leaves small, chipped material that I can put directly into my compost bin. The big screens works good for wood chips.

He says the tractor has more than enough power to operate the chipper. “I was already using the pulley on back of the tractor to operate a rototiller, snowblower, and lawn mower. I put steel wheels on the unit so I can pull it around my yard.”

He bought the chopper at an auction for \$40. “I came up with the idea because I



Lloyd Litchy converted an old Gehl stationary silage chopper into a low-cost wood chipper. He uses a garden tractor to belt-drive it.

have a 1-acre yard with a lot of trees and leaves. During the fall I use another garden tractor equipped with a bagger and empty the leaves into the chipper. The chopped-up leaves make great compost. It only takes about a year before they turn

into nice, black dirt.”

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Shock Absorber Seat Bracket Smooths Out Bumpy Rides

Ken Connaughty loves how fast he can mow his lawn with his zero-turn mower. He isn’t fond of the aching back he has after he gets off the mower, however.

The Minnesota farm equipment manufacturer decided to fix the problem by building a shock absorbing seat.

“I made one just for my own use,” Connaughty says. “Now we’ve got a few out locally and people just love them.” Among the users is his father who has a bad back and wouldn’t think of going back to mowing lawn without his new seat.

Connaughty started selling Smooth Operator seats in September, marketing to zero-turn lawn mower owners and landscape business owners. To attach the unit, remove

the seat, slip on the Smooth Operator and replace the seat on top. Bolt it in place with the long bolts provided.

Smooth Operator weighs 11 lbs. and is a powder-coated steel roller system that absorbs bumps.

“It’s painted black so you don’t even notice it’s there,” Connaughty says. With adjustable mount holes, the seat has worked on all the common zero-turn mowers such as Deere, Ariens, Simplicity and Gravely. Connaughty notes that Smooth Operator raises the seat by about 1 1/2 in., which may be too high to work with the bars on some skidsteers.

The seats are sold through Connaughty Sales Inc., for \$200. Connaughty welcomes



Shock absorbing seat bolts on under vehicle’s original seat and uses a steel roller system to absorb bumps.

dealer inquiries.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Connaughty Sales, 32325 State Rd. 43 N., Rush-

ford, Minn. 55971 (ph 800 826-2748; www.connaughtysales.com).

Front-Mount Bale Unroller

Faced with the need for a round bale unroller but not wanting to spend the money for a commercial unit, Maynard Weaver, Waynesboro, Va., came up with a low-cost solution by mounting the rear axle and wheels off a 1980 Sears Craftsman riding mower onto the front of his Ford 6610S tractor.

The axle and wheels are mounted on a frame made of ¼-in. thick by 4-in. rails, with a large piece of angle iron welded across the top. The angle iron slips into the tractor weight rack just like a weight.

The 16-in. wheels, spaced 3 ft. apart and about 5 in. off the ground, spin freely. To unroll a bale, Weaver simply drives forward and pushes the wheels against the bale.

“It’s a simple, low-cost system with al-

most nothing to go wrong,” says Weaver, who runs a cow-calf operation. “I use a 3-pt. bale fork on the tractor to haul the bale from my yard to the field. Then I turn the tractor around and roll it out. Once I can get the bale to start moving it’ll keep unrolling out.

“With my bale unroller there’s hardly any waste. I can unroll only as much feed as my cattle will eat in one day, and then come back the next day and unroll more of the bale. Whenever I want to use the tractor for other purposes I just take the unroller off,” notes Weaver.

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Front-mount bale unroller uses the rear axle and wheels off an old riding mower. The 16-in. wheels spin freely. Weaver simply drives forward, pushing wheels against bale.