

Portable Canopy Provides Instant Shade For Livestock

“Blazing sunshine and excessive heat are a serious problem for livestock producers who graze their animals,” says Wisconsin beef producer Vince Hundt. He and his business partners, Guthrie Knapp and Peter Bergquist, came up with a simple solution called The Shade Haven. It’s a 1,200 sq. ft. portable canopy that sets up in minutes and provides livestock with a shady spot on pasture that can be easily moved around.

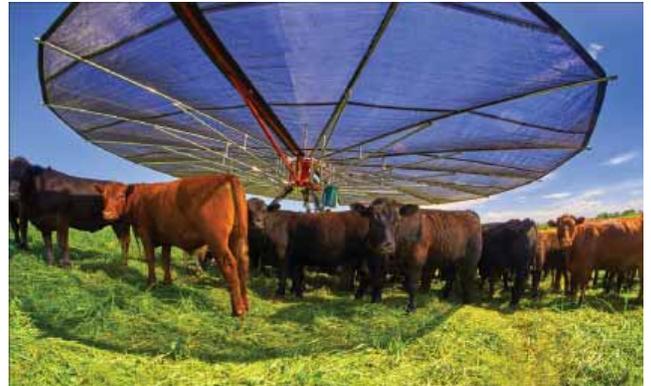
“Hot days can stress livestock,” says Hundt. “If they’re beef cattle excessive heat cuts down on their rate of gain. If they’re dairy cattle, their milk production suffers.”

The Shade Haven is ideal for livestock producers who use rotational grazing in open fields. The 40-ft. dia. canopy is made of black polypropylene knit shade cloth. The Shade cloth blocks 80 percent of the solar radiation that would reach the ground. “The black color absorbs sunlight and radiates it upward, creating a light breeze under the canopy with surface temperatures of the ground and animals about 20 degrees cooler than in the direct sunlight,” Hundt says. “It works like a giant oak tree that moves wherever you need it.”

Hundt and his business partners, who have a background in engineering and

architecture, developed a prototype 3 years ago, refined the design in 2013, and sold initial production units in 2013, now there are over 50 units in use nationwide. “I used it first on my own farm,” says Hundt. “The cattle spent time under it whenever the sun was shining from May through September.” The canopy is large enough to provide shade for 50 to 60 mature animals at one time. It’s built like a large Chinese fan, supported by tubular steel trusses and a tripod that’s mounted on a wheeled transport. The canopy lays completely flat when it’s open, about 9 ft. off the ground, Hundt says. The Shade Haven can easily withstand winds up to 35 miles an hour when deployed. “If there’s a big thunderstorm headed your way, it only takes a few minutes to fold the canopy and secure it.

Hundt says the portability of The Shade Haven is a very important selling point. An ATV can easily pull the device from one Portable 40-ft. dia. canopy is made of black



Portable 40-ft. dia. canopy is made of black poly knit shade cloth. It sets up in minutes and is easy to move.

poly knit shade cloth. It sets up in minutes and is easy to move from one location to another.

“Moving The Shade Haven in a paddock helps with nutrient distribution. In the shade, the cattle will naturally apply more manure in one spot, or if you’ve got a problem area with weeds, they’ll grind those down with their hooves,” Hundt says.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Shade Haven LLC, 1132 Nelson Parkway, Viroqua, WI 54665 (ph 855 247-4233; www.shadehaven.net).

Reader Inquiry No. 124

“Mob Grazing” Pays Off For Cattle Producer

Neil Dennis has quadrupled the carrying capacity of his pastures and cut his costs with mob grazing. Concentrating heavy numbers of cattle on small areas also has increased the native grasses, forbs and legumes found on the former croplands. He now hires out as a consultant to other grazers and is a sought-after speaker on mob grazing.

“I got the idea after moving the herd into a 6-acre paddock before later moving them into one with 40 acres. Regrowth on the small paddock was thicker, and recovery was faster, allowing higher carrying capacity,” says Dennis, who then started experimenting with the idea.

Since he gets paid for pounds gained on the cattle he custom grazes, carrying capacity is vital to Dennis’ bottom line. Ultra-high stock density grazing has produced twice as many pounds of beef per acre as conventional methods.

Dennis soon adopted the heavy grazing technique on all his acres. Today he will graze up to 1.3 million lbs. of beef per acre. The cattle quickly graze down available forage, spread the manure across the area, and trample it in with their feet.

Sugar is key, according to Dennis. He

wants the cattle to have access to the grass when sugar content of the pasture is high. He takes a sample of the grass, squeezes it into a ball and puts it through a garlic press, squeezing the juice onto a refractometer to check sugar content. He also checks for pH.

Dennis does some supplemental over seeding, but relies mostly on natural reseeding. He holds off on grazing each paddock at least once a year until the plants have gone to seed. Future grazing presses the fallen seed into the soil, encouraging germination.

Brome grass is a mainstay in Dennis’ pastures. He has seen it adapt and improve with mob grazing at the same time native prairie forbs and grasses returned on their own. Organic matter in the former grain fields has increased from 3 to 10 percent, similar to what native prairies were thought to have. Water infiltration and holding capacity have also increased.

“It can take as much as 8 in. rain per hour without running off,” says Dennis. “This summer we went a month and a half without rain, but the plants kept growing.”

Dennis says the “fencing toys” he has developed allow him to move 800 to 1,000 head of cattle as many as 10 times a day.



Dennis moves 800 to 1,000 head of cattle up to 10 times a day, thanks to methods he’s developed to quickly set up fencing.

They let him set a quarter mile of fence in 9 min. The BattLatch automatic gate releases (Vol. 38, No. 5), which he also sells, makes shifting cattle much easier.

One thing Dennis didn’t expect was how much healthier everything grew. The cattle gained faster and no longer required as much medication. One direct way it showed up was mineral consumption; another was change to the land itself.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Neil Dennis, Box 8, Wawota, Sask. Canada S0G 5A0 (ph 306 739-2896; sunnybrae@rfnw.com).