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Articulated "Chore Machine" For Turkey Barns

This new "chore machine" was developed specifically to reduce the workload in large turkey barns.

The Barn Boss has a standing platform with a joystick control on front, followed by a "live box" with an apron chain similar to a manure spreader. Load capacity is up to 1,600 lbs. The rig is powered by a Honda 3 hp. gas engine, with hydrostatic drive and pump similar to a zero-turn riding mower.

The machine's oscillating, articulated chassis is designed to smoothly negotiate uneven terrain found inside a typical barn, and its rounded front allows gentle movement among turkeys. The operator makes use of a "leaning post" that doubles as a toolbox.

Appleton, Minn. turkey farmer Brad Mitchell and co-worker Jeff Stitt led the effort to build the machine. Mitchell is the owner of Shadowland Farms, a turkey

confinement operation that produces nearly 1 million turkeys a year in 16 barns. They saw a growing need for a machine to help employees do their work.

"It's not uncommon to find turkey barns 1,000 feet long," says Mitchell. "As barns have gotten longer, turkeys have been bred larger. Some can get aggressive or territorial. As a result, doing chores can be physically daunting for employees. It's nothing for

a guy to walk 6 miles a day – through turkeys. You have to carry tools, and move birds (mortalities) out of the barn. You're physically worn out at the end of the day."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Brad Mitchell, Shadowland Farms, 980 Hwy. 7 S.W., Appleton, Minn. 56208 (ph 320 226-3940; www.barnboss.com).

No Pump Needed For Hydraulic Top Link

Bill Medley designed an independent hydraulic top link that doesn't need auxiliary power of any kind. Replumbing a tractor for auxiliary power can cost thousands of dollars. He used a few parts from a hardware store, hydraulic hose, a \$120 hydraulic cylinder, and a couple of \$30 ball valves.

"I wanted to be able to adjust the top link on my compact tractor without getting off and doing it manually," says Medley. "I didn't want to spend the money to put in an auxiliary line, so I looked for an alternative."

He found a commercial product, but users reported it did not stay put when set. He came up with a design that lets him adjust the top link from the tractor seat, and it stays put.

He points out that a hydraulic cylinder can be adjusted by hand if you have a place for the oil to go when you retract the ram. However, if the oil has no place to go, the ram stays put, even under extreme pressure.

He recognized that he needed a reservoir to hold the oil and keep it available, as well as a way to lock the flow of oil when he wanted.

He bought the hydraulic cylinder and

mounted it in place of a standard top link.

For ease of access and simplicity, he mounted his control valves and reservoir on a ROPS column beside his seat. He attached them using heavy-duty hose clamps with a block of rubber between the reservoir and the ROPS to cushion it.

"I ran hoses from the cylinder to 2 high-pressure ball valves on the ROPS," says Medley.

Hoses from the ball valves connect at a T coupling mounted to the bottom of the reservoir. The T completes the hydraulic circuit and provides a place for the excess oil to go.

"I made the reservoir by capping a 10-in. length of 2-in. Schedule 40 pvc pipe," says Medley. "It is never under pressure and only needs to hold about a quart of oil."

Medley added a breather tube to the reservoir. It prevents a vacuum from forming or air from entering the system as oil is withdrawn.

"I drilled a hole in the side of the square clean-out cap at the top of the reservoir," says Medley. "If you drill through the top of it, rain can get in."



Medley mounted a hydraulic cylinder in place of a standard 3-pt. top link, and ran hoses from the cylinder to 2 high-pressure ball valves and a reservoir mounted on his ROPS.

To set the top link on a 3-pt. mounted implement, such as a dirt blade, Medley opens both ball valves. This releases pressure on both sides of the cylinder. To shorten the top link, he drives forward, dragging the implement and causing it to pivot on the lower links of the hitch. This retracts the ram on the top link, pushing excess hydraulic fluid into the reservoir. Reversing the procedure by backing up with the implement on the ground extends the ram.

"When the top link length is what I want,

I shut both ball valves. The ram is locked in place," says Medley.

He points out that the system also allows him to adjust the top link manually. This makes it easy to connect the top link when hooking up an implement.

"I used 1/2-in. hoses to match the ports on the cylinder," he says. "Smaller hoses might make it harder to push the ram by hand."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, William Medley, 1065 Douglas Branch Rd., Elkview, W. Va. 25071 (ph 304 545-7738).

Post "Protectors"

If you're tired of seeing mailbox and fence posts get beat up by mowers and string trimmers, you'll like these new post protectors.

The 4-sided, 4-in. tall guards are made from high impact, UV-protected pvc and snap in place with no tools around the bases of posts. They consist of 4 individual shields that slide together. They can be installed on everything from ordinary wood and steel posts to vinyl. Available colors include black, white, and bronze.

"They're easy to put together and stop weed trimmers, lawn mowers and other equipment from chewing up the bottoms of posts stuck in yards," says Kane Carmody, Post Shields, Inc., Janesville, Wis.

Their 4 by 4-in. Post Shields are sized to fit 3 1/2-in. square posts and sell for \$7.99 plus S&H; 6 by 6-in. models for 5 1/2-in. square



Made from high impact pvc, "protector" snaps in place around base of post.

posts sell for \$10.99 plus S&H.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Post Shields, Inc., 20 S. Main St., Suite 3, Janesville, Wis. 53545 (ph 855 757-4435; customercare@postshields.com; www.postshields.com).

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