

South Dakota Farmer Builds Countertops In Farm Shop

Jeff Hoeft has taken farming diversity to a new level. He's converted most of his farm shop into a manufacturing plant to make customized countertops out of stone slabs. After a couple years of research and convincing his banker and wife that it was a good idea, Hoeft started Prairie Stone in August 2020 on his New Effington, S. Dak., farm. It's a very rural area at least 70 miles from any large city.

The idea for it came from a couple of events. After a 2015 back fusion surgery, Hoeft, who has farmed for 25 years, was advised he shouldn't plan on farming his whole life. Then, in 2018 he was frustrated with the cost and two-month delay of getting countertops when he was rebuilding his home after a fire. With some guidance from people in the stonecutting industry, including the Stone Fabricators Alliance, he started thinking seriously about creating Prairie Stone.

He sold some land to help fund the building remodel and equipment. Cutting back from 2,800 acres to 1,200 acres gives him the time to run both operations. He sees being rural as an advantage.

"The burnout rate for stone shops is pretty high. Because we also farm, it's actually a

nice change of pace. We can be as busy as we want to be," Hoeft says.

Because the shop is on his own property, he saves on rent and water bills and doesn't have to meet city regulations. That makes his pricing competitive. Customers in a 100-mile radius don't mind traveling to a rural location, and a design feature on the business website allows customers to choose the type and color of stone they want from the comfort of their homes.

"We can take a digital picture of the stone so customers can see exactly what it will look like," Hoeft says.

He has about 70 large slabs of granite and quartz (man-made material with resin to add color) from stone supplier MSI in stock and can order whatever customers want.

He cuts the stone precisely with an Italian-made computerized CNC saw with a 30 hp. motor. Other computerized tools polish and edge the stone. All require lots of water, 50 gal./minute, that collects in drains and is 100 percent recycled. About 10,000 gal. of water/day is filtered and conditioned to reuse.

Hoeft and a couple of employees install the countertops for local customers, but they also bid on commercial jobs. They recently finished windowsills and shipped them to a



Jeff Hoeft converted his farm shop to build customized countertops out of stone slabs, using an Italian-made computerized CNC saw to cut the stone.

Florida hotel, for example, and are open to customers anywhere in the U.S.

Hoeft says others in the industry have warned him that demand will grow and he will run out of space. Not a problem, he says. On the farm there's plenty of acreage for expansion. For him it's just like planting more acres.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jeff Hoeft, Prairie Stone, 46631 104th St., New Effington, S.Dak. 57255 (ph 605 637-5582; www.prairie-stone.com; info@prairie-stone.com; Facebook: Prairie Stone).

Insulights.com

A NEW AFFORDABLE ELECTRIC FENCE MONITOR

Checking your electric fence is NOW quick and easy.

Insulights flashing electric fence insulator eliminates the need for manual electric fence testing.

The blue insulator has a flashing LED light. When installed, the LED light will flash with the pulse of the electric fence. If there is a break in the fence circuit, the light stops flashing where the fence wire is not hot.

- Check fence lines from your vehicle
- Compatible with all fence posts and most wire
- Also serves as a wildlife deterrent



Named A Top 10 Finalist in the Farm Bureau Ag Innovations Challenge

For more information or to order visit www.insulights.com, or call Sue at (712) 568-3005

Reader Inquiry No. 56



Dalam bale elevators have lightweight aluminum frames and are ideal for handling small square bales.

Super Light Bale Elevator

Dave Lambright's 12-ft. hay bale elevator weighs less than a couple of bales of hay at 107 lbs. Even the larger, 32-ft. model can be easily picked up by 2 men. The portable elevators are ideal for handling small square bales.

"A farmer in the area sells around 20,000 bales to local Amish farms and got tired of unloading by hand," says Lambright, Dalam Welding. "He asked me to make a lightweight portable elevator. It worked out well, and after a few modifications, we started making them for others as well."

Lambright uses 1 by 1 1/2-in. aluminum tubing for the frames and a belt-driven chain to move the bales. Stainless steel bolts with zinc nuts are used on the elevators. Models are available from 12 ft. in length to 52 ft. Options include electric motors and carriages. A motor with belt and pulley is priced at \$230.

"We don't price the elevators with motors as so many of our customers have them on hand," says Lambright.

Prices for the elevators range from \$1,105 for the 12-ft. model to \$4,025 for the 52-ft. model. Carriages come in light, medium and heavy duty. They range from \$720 to \$1,085. An extra lightweight carriage on bike tires is also available.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dalam Welding, 7665 S 200 W, Topeka, Ind. 46571 (ph 260 593-0168, ext 1).

Reader Inquiry No. 57