

## Front-Mount Mower Cuts Around Roadside Culverts

"I used to cut the tall grass and weeds around our roadside culverts with a string trimmer, but that came to an end when I fell after tripping on a pile of grass and dam near broke my neck," says retired Minnesota farmer Al Hernke. "I got a real scolding from several people, so I didn't trim for 6 weeks and the grass and weeds took off. That really irritated me, and when nobody offered to cut them, I came up with my culvert mower idea."

Hernke uses a 20-in. push mower mounted on a small two-wheeled cart. The cart had a 4-ft. long reach made of 2-in. tube steel that he extended to 8 ft. so he can push the small mower up and around culverts with his 6-ft. zero-turn.

The mower is attached to the cart with a box frame that Hernke made from 1 1/2-in. angle iron. A swivel near the carry wheels lets the mower ride up and over obstructions. The cart reach attaches to a ball hitch on the front of his mower. To move from one location to another, he raises the small mower, secures it with a chain, and tows the cart behind his zero-turn.

"One little wrinkle I hadn't thought of when building the cart was that push mowers have a safety handle that has to be held tight for the engine to run," Hernke says. "To solve that problem, I shortened the push handle and safety bar by two feet and laid it flat. When I start the mower, I slide two zip ties across the safety bar to hold it tight to the main handle so the engine runs. It works slick as a whistle."

Hernke says the whole setup cost him about \$200, most of which was for the 3.5-hp. push mower and the hardware to bolt the frame together.



Hernke mounted a 20-in. push mower on a two-wheel cart with a long reach and uses it to mow around culverts and steep banks.

"I used to weld all sorts of things, but now I've got a pacemaker and the doctor told me I can't use a welder anymore because it interferes with the pacemaker operation."

Hernke uses his zero-turn and small mower almost daily during mowing season on nearly 6 miles of ditches, which always look like parkland next to the growing crops. "We've kept them mowed clean for years and I'll keep it up as long as I can," Hernke says.

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## "Unpluggers" Keep Planters Working

Travis Van Well of South Dakota found a simple solution to keep a John Deere planter humming.

"I was working for a big farmer and the planter kept plugging up," he says. "I played around with stuff until I figured out how to keep the chunks from clogging up the hoses."

Van Well says he expanded a simple piece of metal with a frame around it to keep the metal from rubbing against the mechanism.

It took a little adjusting to find the right size grate. The first attempt didn't allow the corn and beans to pass through the grate and still stop anything that would plug up the hoses.

"We figured out the slope of the boxes that it sits in," Van Well says. "I played around with the size until it sat snugly in the planter."

"The thing many farmers like is the grate is not bolted in at all," he says. "If stuff piles up on the grates, you reach in with the provided handle and pull it up to the top of the box."

Without a grate to catch the debris, farmers have to take time to clear out clogs.

Van Well Grates are available on the New Ag Supply website for \$390 each. They're available for 35, 55, 70, and 100-bushel tanks.

The grates are currently available for John Deere 1700/DB Series Planter CCS Tanks and 1690, 1890, and 1990 CS Tanks.

Van Well says he's working on building grates to fit other models like Kinze and Case. Farmers with other models consistently ask for grates to fit their planters.

"The Kinze and Case units are a little different than Deere planters," Van Well says.



Van Well planter grate shown with lift bar to clear debris that would've gone into the planter.

"There's a slide that farmers can push shut, go underneath it, and then clean out the problem."

"They can reopen the slide, so they don't have to clean the box out," he says. "However, guys see how simple this solution is and realize they don't have to crawl under anymore."

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## New Doors Boost Grain Bin Safety

Grain bin manufacturer Sukup says its new door for bins is a big step toward improving bin safety.

"There have been incidents where farmers didn't shut the inner panels before closing and latching the outer panels," says John Hanig, Sukup grain bin sales director. "The outer panel is just a thin sheet to keep the weather away from the inner panels."

The inner panels support the structural integrity of the bin. "What happens is, as they start filling the bin, the grain starts to leak out," Hanig says. "The outer door will bow because it can't take the weight. Farmers see the grain leaking, get curious, and when they open the door, they can get buried in a wall of grain."

He says the company worked for over a year trying to find a solution to the problem.

Farmers know when they pull the inner panels shut, there are handles to pull down to lock them in place. Hanig says the handles used to catch on a permanent piece mounted on the outside of the bin.

"We did away with all the external latching," Hanig says. "These handles each have a little tab that faces directly at you when they're closed. There's a slot in the outer door the tab goes through."

"That's what the latch will grab onto," he says. "It provides the catch for the outer latch. That part we didn't change."

"If that handle is flipped up and that lever isn't facing toward you, then there's nothing to latch the outer door," he says. "When you figure out something's wrong, you open the outer door and see you forgot to latch or close either one."

In other words, the doors have new hardware that ensures the inner panels are closed before the outer door will close



Standard on new Sukup grain bins, their new latch system safety doors can be retrofitted to older bins as well.

correctly with both latches engaged.

Inner panels of Sukup's 44-in. and 66-in tall doors, both of which use the new safety hardware, provide structural support to grain bins.

Safety doors are sold through the Sukup dealer network, and locations are available on the company website.

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## "No Chain" Bale Chopper

A New Zealand Company says its "no chain" bale chopper makes daily feeding chores easier.

"The focus is on simplicity," says Lance Paskewitz, Hustler Equipment. "We tried to reduce or eliminate the wear and tear of moving parts."

He says simplicity means fewer breakdowns and the chainless balers are powered by hydraulics.

"That means less horsepower and fuel consumption," Paskewitz says. "Our mounted chainless bale processors can feed anything from dry hay to bailing and square or round bales."

"When you want to load up a new bale, simply drive up to the haystack and lower the table. Then, a hidden system of three integrated bales spears allows you to spear the bale and lift it onto the unit," he says.

The bales sit on a lift tray that moves up and down with hydraulics. The tray moves the bale into two rotating drums with flails. The drums are a patented rotor system with 3-to-1 timing.

"The top rotor is spinning three times faster than the bottom rotor," Paskewitz says. "It's teasing the hay, fluffing it up, and making it more palatable. We aren't chopping it up and losing those nutritional leaves or grain heads."

He says one of the advantages of the chainless baler is there aren't any spare parts farmers need on hand. Even the teeth are made of steel that manufacturers use on the cutting edge of bulldozer buckets.

"Farmers have fed up to 35,000 bales through these chainless machines," Paskewitz says. "There's not a lick of paint left on the rotors, but they still look brand new."

The bale choppers can either be 3-pt.



Bales sit on a lift tray that moves up and down with hydraulics. The tray moves the bale into two rotating drums with flails. The drums are a patented rotor system with 3-to-1 timing.

mounted or front-end loader mounted," he says.

This feeder is loader-mounted and allows producers to reach over the fence and unload 200 lbs. in one pen and 100 lbs. into another one, reducing waste.

Prices for chainless bale feeders typically run between \$15,000 and \$25,000. The company has dealers spread throughout the U.S. and Canada, with the dealer locations available on the website.

The company's original headquarters are in New Zealand, and the U.S. headquarters are in Lakeville, Minn.

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