

Homemade Dog Run Made From Cattle Panels

Brandon Handsaker of Colo, Iowa, built a gymnasium-sized fenced-in yard for his four dogs: a German shepherd, a Labrador retriever, and two French bulldogs. It measures just under 5 ft. tall and is made from cattle panels and treated posts. "This was all my wife's idea," Handsaker says. "We wanted a way to keep the dogs safe and not have to worry about them when out in the yard. Plus, I wanted to keep the rattlers away from them."

Originally, Handsaker contacted a local fencing company for a black chain link fence. "That quote came back at \$20,000," he says. "I knew I could do it cheaper."

Handsaker started building each panel in the winter and stacked the finished ones in a shed until assembling them in the spring. He used a Kreg jig and dado saw blades on a table saw to cut the cattle panels and get thickness off so they would rest on wood on the bottom and sides. Each panel was framed with wood, both to make it safe on top for dogs and humans to come in contact with, and to prevent the dogs from digging their way out.

Then in the spring, he hired a contractor to dig the holes and pour in cement for the posts that he attached each panel to. The fence is built with two gates, one that's human-sized and one large enough for a pickup truck to fit through. "Here in Iowa, we can get crazy windstorms like a derecho," Handsaker said.



Dog run made from cattle panels and treated posts.

"I wanted to have easy access for cleanup purposes."

He estimates the project cost about \$2,500 for an 84-ft. by 60-ft. fence made with 33 posts. Handsaker is pleased with how everything turned out and wouldn't change much if he had to do it again. "It takes some time to do this right," he says. "You definitely need basic carpentry skills. But wood is forgiving. If you mess up, it's usually possible to redo things."

New App Shares Combine Settings

Save grain and make more money with better combine settings via the Combinesettings.com app. Use the web-based app to share settings, such as concave, fan speed, and more, with others running the same combine in the same crop in your general area. Trevor Scherman, his wife Michelle, and their partner Megan Madden came up with the app as a way to share high-value information between combine operators.

"Incorrect settings throw thousands of dollars out the back of a combine," says Scherman. "Peer-to-peer information is the best way to set your combine up for top performance. However, ask about combine settings with online groups like Facebook, and you're likely to get comments that make fun of the question or criticize it."

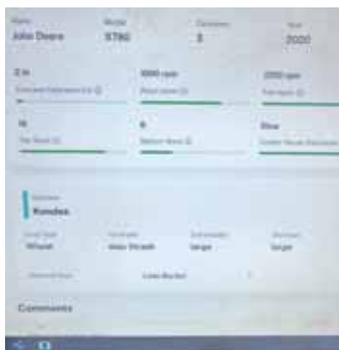
With the Combinesettings.com app, users are verified when they sign up. They identify the combine they run, the settings they use, and the area where they farm, as well as the crops they raise.

Scherman is confident the sharing of information up front encourages others to do the same. The Reddit-style site allows comments and questions under certain topic questions.

"We're trying to get rid of the noise of other online groups, such as comments from people who don't even run a combine," says Scherman.

The Schermans and Madden began introducing the app midsummer to a limited number of users. Since Combinesettings.com won the Ag in Motion Innovations Award for Business Solutions, it's attracted so much attention from farmers that the website has crashed repeatedly. A new, more robust website has been developed for farmers and others.

"We've had a lot of combine dealers and after-market manufacturers approach us about getting their customers signed up," says Scherman. "They hope to reach out to their customers more efficiently through the app



Combinesettings.com app on desktop screen.

than actually going to the field."

The app can be downloaded at no cost by signing up on the website and sharing information. In mid-November, the company plans to introduce a \$199 per year fee structure in addition to the free app. Among other features, it'll allow users to indicate which settings for a particular combine and crop have proven most valuable. They'll also be able to save settings with the app and share comments on settings with other users.

"We're working on a map that will allow users to draw a virtual circle in a given area, such as a 300 to 400-mile diameter, to see who's running a similar combine to theirs," says Scherman. "We'll be adding more features as more users join. Every time we launch a feature, users come up with more combines and combine models to include."

The partners have been signing up users at farm shows and have also started a user group in Australia.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Combinesettings.com, Battleford, Sask., Canada (ph 833-567-7726; admin@combinesettings.com; www.combinesettings.com).

Dump Cart Great For Spreading Gravel

Spreading gravel or dirt where it's needed is tough to do, but Jeff Hoard made it easy. His low-cost solution was to repurpose an abandoned pickup box trailer with a tilt bed.

Hoard didn't want to invest much in the project. Aside from using it to spread on his driveway, he saw little future use for it.

The first step was to fabricate a subframe from 3-in. pipe. He welded it into a T with the top bar hinged to the axle. The hinge was fabricated by welding slightly smaller pipe stubs in the ends of the top bar pipe. The stubs slipped into short lengths of 3-in. pipe that were welded to the bottom plates of the U-bolts that once secured the axle to the springs.

"The pipe-in-pipe hinge allows the trailer bed to pivot for dumping," says Hoard. "The dump bed is slightly nose forward. However, placing a piece of plywood at an angle in the front of the bed shifts the load slightly to the rear."

The "slightly" aspect ensures the bed doesn't slam in either direction, notes Hoard. He also fabricated a simple bed lock with a rope release. He rested the old trailer tongue on the subframe tongue and connected them with a trip lever.

"I run a rope through the back of my driver's window to the trip lever to release the dump movement," says Hoard. "It works without any hydraulics or complicated mechanics. When the bed empties, it tips back and locks into place."

One of the few negatives is that the tires offer the only suspension. The spring shackle on one side was damaged. Rather than fix it, Hoard welded pieces of angle iron from the



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frame to the U-bolts on both sides, creating a rigid connection.

"At the rear, I welded a length of pipe between the frame rails with two larger pipes around it to act as a roller when dumping on the fly," says Hoard.

To ensure a smooth flow and a nice long spread of material when dumping, Hoard installed a porous rear gate. If he ever wants to haul a load with the trailer, he'll temporarily insert a piece of plywood against the rear gate.

Another small negative to the project is the size of the pickup bed, notes Hoard. "Unfortunately, it was only a 1/2-ton truck, so I can't pile on the dirt as I would like," he says. "But it still works for fixing my road. Like all my projects, everything is welded with gussets and bracing."

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Feed bunk created from an aluminum water trough and placed against a fence corner.

"Easy & Quick" Feed Bunk

By Heather Smith Thomas

Last winter, we created a new little pasture by clearing out trees and willow bushes in hopes of growing more grass in that area. The willows have been coming back in again prolifically, sending up shoots all over the pasture. The heifers ate them back a little during the summer, but at the rate the new shoots are regrowing, we're fearful that we'll lose all the cleared ground we'd gained.

We didn't want to use spray, so we decided to winter a couple of yearling bulls in the new little pasture and let them work on the willows. We figured we'd take them out again in early spring before the grass starts to grow.

They still need hay for winter feed, so we had to figure out some kind of feeder for them. Instead of spending several hundred for a commercial feeder, we decided to create one with materials on hand.

My daughter and I found an old leaky aluminum water trough that hadn't been used for 25 years, realizing it would be

perfect for the job since any rain or snow melt would leak out of it instead of pooling around the hay. To reinforce and secure it so the bulls couldn't damage it, we situated it tightly in the fence corner, against the braces, and placed an old board under the edge of the trough to keep it from being flat on the ground.

We braced a post tightly across the top of the trough to reinforce it so the bulls couldn't mash it down when leaning into the trough to eat. We also put a pole along the bottom of the water trough to make sure it didn't get damaged and caved in by the bulls' hooves.

Now, the young bulls are happily eating willows and a little dormant grass in that pasture, with plenty of room for exercise, and enjoying a little hay from their "new" feeder to balance their diet. If we use this as a winter pasture for young bulls every year, we may eventually win the war on willows.