



THE BALING WIRE

Spring 2006 Edition

Getting Around the Farm Again

The Colorado AgrAbility Project helps Colorado's farm and ranch families affected by injury or disability remain independent in agriculture. Colorado AgrAbility has over eight years of experience



Mr. Nesselhuf and his Kawasaki Mule.

helping farmers and ranchers identify different ways of using modified tools or assistive technology to help make farm and ranch tasks safer and easier. This can range from large to small modifications. It may be finding replacement tractor seats and seat suspensions for farmers with lower back pain. It might also be help locating additional tractor steps to make it easier for a rancher with arthritic knees to get into/out of his swather. It could be something larger like helping identify a lift that will allow a farmer or rancher using a wheelchair to get into/out of his tractor cab. Or it could be something completely unique like it was for Mr. Nesselhuf.

After almost two years of struggle, Manzanola farmer Bert Nesselhuf has a new lease on life. Bert Nesselhuf has Multiple Sclerosis but with the help of the Easter Seals Colorado (ESC) AgrAbility Project and the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), Nesselhuf can continue to work the land that has been in his family for over 50 years. "My father was a farmer, I'm a farmer and my son is a farmer." states Nesselhuf. "It's what we are."

Having purchased his own farm immediately after High School, Nesselhuf has known no other life than that of a farmer. He now runs his farm and the farm that belonged to his parents.

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Colorado AgrAbility Works!

Promoting independence in agriculture for Colorado's farm and ranch families affected by injury or disability

Providing Neighbor-to-Neighbor peer support from another farm or ranch family in a similar situation

Information about equipment modifications and adaptations to accommodate for an injury or disability

Please call Dr. Bob Fetsch at 970-491-5648 for more information!

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Being a wheelchair user for over five years, it became more and more difficult for Nesselhuf to do the work that he loves. But, it wasn't until he broke his leg in November 2004, that he seriously believed he would not be able to continue farming his land. "Because he lost so much of his mobility, I needed to go everywhere with him," states Ellen Nesselhuf, Bert's wife. "We have a mini-van that was modified for his wheelchair, but that didn't work too well on the farm." It wasn't until a friend gave his name to Jason Beck, AgrAbility Project Coordinator with Easter Seals Colorado, that other avenues were researched. AgrAbility, a program sponsored by Colorado State University Cooperative Extension and Easter Seals Colorado, helps make it possible for farmers, ranchers and their families, who are facing obstacles due to injury or disability stay in this demanding line of work.



Mr. Nesselhuf discussing the Mule with AgrAbility Rehab Specialist, Bill Tiffany.

Beck contacted Nesselhuf and visited his farm. After evaluating Nesselhuf's situation, Beck made an assessment of what was needed to keep Nesselhuf working his farm. Beck coordinated with ESC Rural Rehab Specialist, Bill Tiffany, to design and implement the modifications that he needed for his farming equipment. "After evaluating Mr. Nesselhuf's needs, it was decided he needed a vehicle that he could

drive from his wheelchair." says Bill Tiffany. "He needed something that would give him independence."



Mr. Nesselhuf driving the Mule from his wheelchair.

Easter Seals Colorado had donated an electric wheelchair that gave Nesselhuf more freedom, so when Bill located a UTV like the Kawasaki Mule, he designed the modifications that would accommodate it. He found that if the front seat was removed, the electric wheelchair fit perfectly. He then consulted with Mueller's Auto Inc. in Pueblo, CO to do the



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modifications. With the help of a ramp attached by his son, Nesselhuf can now get on and off the Mule by himself. "This has opened up the world to him," states Ellen, "It's given him back his independence. It's a whole new life for him"

"It's been a really long process," states Beck. "But it's been well worth it. That's what the AgrAbility Project is about. We have to do everything possible to help farmers and ranchers continue to do the work they love."

AgrAbility is a nationwide program that provides information, services and education to agricultural families with one or more people who are affected by physical limitations or disabilities. Injuries and disabilities that Colorado AgrAbility works with can include back pain and injury, Multiple Sclerosis, knee and shoulder pain, visual impairment, spinal cord injury, stroke, diabetes, hearing impairments and amputations. Would you like more information about AgrAbility? To speak to somebody at the Colorado AgrAbility Project please contact Bob Fetsch at Colorado State Cooperative Extension (970-491-5648) or Jason Beck at Easter Seals Colorado at 1-877-279-1638 ext.224 or email Jason at jbeck@eastersealscolorado.org. We look forward to working with you!

Often times, as was the case with Mr. Nesselhuf, many of Colorado's community organizations come together to help farm and ranch families. The changes that were made to Mr. Nesselhuf's Kawasaki Mule could not have been made without the help of **A.V. Hunter Trust**, **Friends of Man**, the **Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation** and contributions made to the **Colorado AgrAbility AT Fund** from members of the **Southern Colorado Livestock Association**. "There are so many farming accidents and injuries that need our attention," states Rhonda Covington, DVR Counselor. "It's great to be able to work hand in hand with an organization like Easter Seals Colorado and the AgrAbility Project.

A large thank you must also be given to Roger Mueller and Bill King at **Mueller's Auto, Inc.** in Pueblo for their ingenuity and craftsmanship that helped take this idea and create a real working machine! Great work!



COLORADO AGRABILITY PROJECT

Creating solutions, changing lives.

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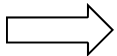
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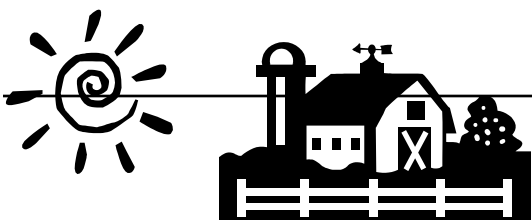


<http://hdfs.caahs.colostate.edu/Pages/Faculty/fetsch/agrability.htm>



Colorado AgrAbility is a joint program between Colorado State University Cooperative Extension and Easter Seals Colorado. The goal of AgrAbility is to maximize independence of farmers, ranchers, and their families who are facing obstacles due to injury, illness, or normal wear and tear on the body by providing services, information and education.

For more information please contact **Jason Beck, Project Coordinator**, at 303-937-7713 x224 or **Bill Tiffany, Rural Rehabilitation Specialist**, at 303-937-7713 x233. Or, if you prefer email, please contact Jason at jbeck@eastersealscolorado.org or Bill at btiffany@eastersealscolorado.org. For TTY/ASCHII please call 303-232-5685



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