

Baling Wire Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2010

FIGHTING THE ELEMENTS (by Barry Pederson, OTS)

Farming and ranching this fall and winter will often mean braving the weather. The rain, cold, wind and snow can take its toll on us but rather than grunt through it, there are ways we might out-smart mother nature. In this article we will discuss different ways to keep ourselves warm and grinning.

I have considerable experience in mountain sports such as backcountry skiing and ice climbing where we try to regulate our body temperature during drastic changes in weather and exertion. I am not an expert in farming or ranching, but the principles of staying warm remain the same. To start, many of us think, keeping warm means bigger jackets, bigger socks, huge gloves, etc. Bigger can be a good thing but it isn't always the best solution. In farm operations, large coats and gloves are more likely to be caught in machinery, lack mobility and dexterity.

So, how do we outsmart mother nature?

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Preparation:

- Start the day with a hearty meal and have snacks to carry with you if you plan on being outside for much of the day. Keeping your body supplied with energy to turn into heat is essential.
- Stay hydrated. Water is crucial in all body functions including making energy.
- Bring a thermos with hot water, tea, or hot chocolate into the field with you. Coffee isn't the best because it is a diuretic and will dehydrate you.
- Dress in 2-3 layers. You can take off layers or add to adjust to the weather and your exertion level.
- If you expect to get wet, bring a change of gloves and socks. Store them in your jacket next to your body heat
- If your feet get wet often, then investing in waterproof boots may be a good idea.
- Plan the day so you do warmer operations during the coldest portions of day (morning and evening) and vice versa.
- Watch the week forecast and plan farm and ranch tasks accordingly.



During Work:

- Out in the field we most often find ourselves wanting to go inside because our hands or feet are cold. The secret to keeping these warm is controlling one's core temperature and keeping hands and feet dry.
- Anticipate hard work and remove layers before moving a number of small bales or mucking stalls. If you are doing this correctly, you should never be sweating.
- For small exertions, just unzipping your jacket may be enough. When you stop working, put layers on. You might not be cold at the time but you are losing greatly-needed core heat that will keep your hands and feet warmer.
- Be aware of changing conditions and add or remove layers accordingly.
- Take breaks for food and water more frequently if you are working harder.
- If your gloves or socks get wet, swap them with the ones you've been storing in your coat. Let the wet ones dry in your coat next to your body heat.

Environmental Supports:

- Cab enclosures for tractors can provide protection from the cold in the winter and sun in the summer.
- A wind barrier can be provided by planting trees on the windward side of frequent work areas.
- Boot traction devices, like Yak Trax provide traction on snow and ice.
- Ski goggles can provide visibility on a snowy, windy day.

For more information on these products contact us at the addresses on back page.



Success Story: Getting Back on His Feet

Leonard Rink has been a farmer all of his life. He loves the land, his tractor, and spending his days outside with the animals. Leonard has made his living off of the land for more than 50 years, but as the days have flown by, he's encountered some of life's difficulties. Farming the land he loves has become just a little more difficult.

Leonard recently had a knee replacement and needs to have a shoulder replaced as well, but he hasn't let a few physical ailments slow him down. Instead, he's been working with Colorado AgrAbility to find new and easier ways to access his tractors and keep working without exacerbating his injuries or creating new ones.

"Things have to get done, no matter if my knee is bothering me or not," says Rink. "That's why working with AgrAbility has been such a great help."

Colorado AgrAbility utilized local resources to help Leonard gain access into his five tractors. A welder modified the existing tractor steps by adding additional steps and increasing the surface area of the steps which allows Leonard to more easily and safely use his tractors. AgrAbility was able to help procure donated funds to help pay for the welding and parts needed to make the updates. "We're very thankful," says Leonard's wife, Rena. "Now I don't worry so much about Leonard when he's out in the fields."

All it took was a few small adjustments, and Leonard is going strong this season.

Colorado AgrAbility, a unique, USDA-funded program run by Goodwill Industries of Denver and Colorado State University Extension is designed to assist some of Colorado's agricultural workers with disabilities or other physical challenges.



Working Smarter, Not Harder:

Tractor Access Options

Our workshop series topic this winter is: “Solutions for Tractor Access and Comfortable Operation.” We’ll look at ways to make long hours in the seat more tolerable, improve your ability to see around you, make hitching easier (without even leaving your seat!), and more. Here is a taste of what you can expect. See the workshops listings and join us to learn more.

Plowing, mowing, towing . . . tractors are designed to make a lot of jobs easier around the farm. They’re not necessarily designed to make it easy for people to get in and out of, however. Many farmers experience difficulty with this at some point. This can result from a variety of causes including leg weakness, limited reach, arthritis pain and more. Here, we have compiled a number of solutions that are available if you ever find yourself having difficulty with tractor access. At the workshops, we’ll go over more information that will be helpful once you do get into your seat.

Mounting Steps

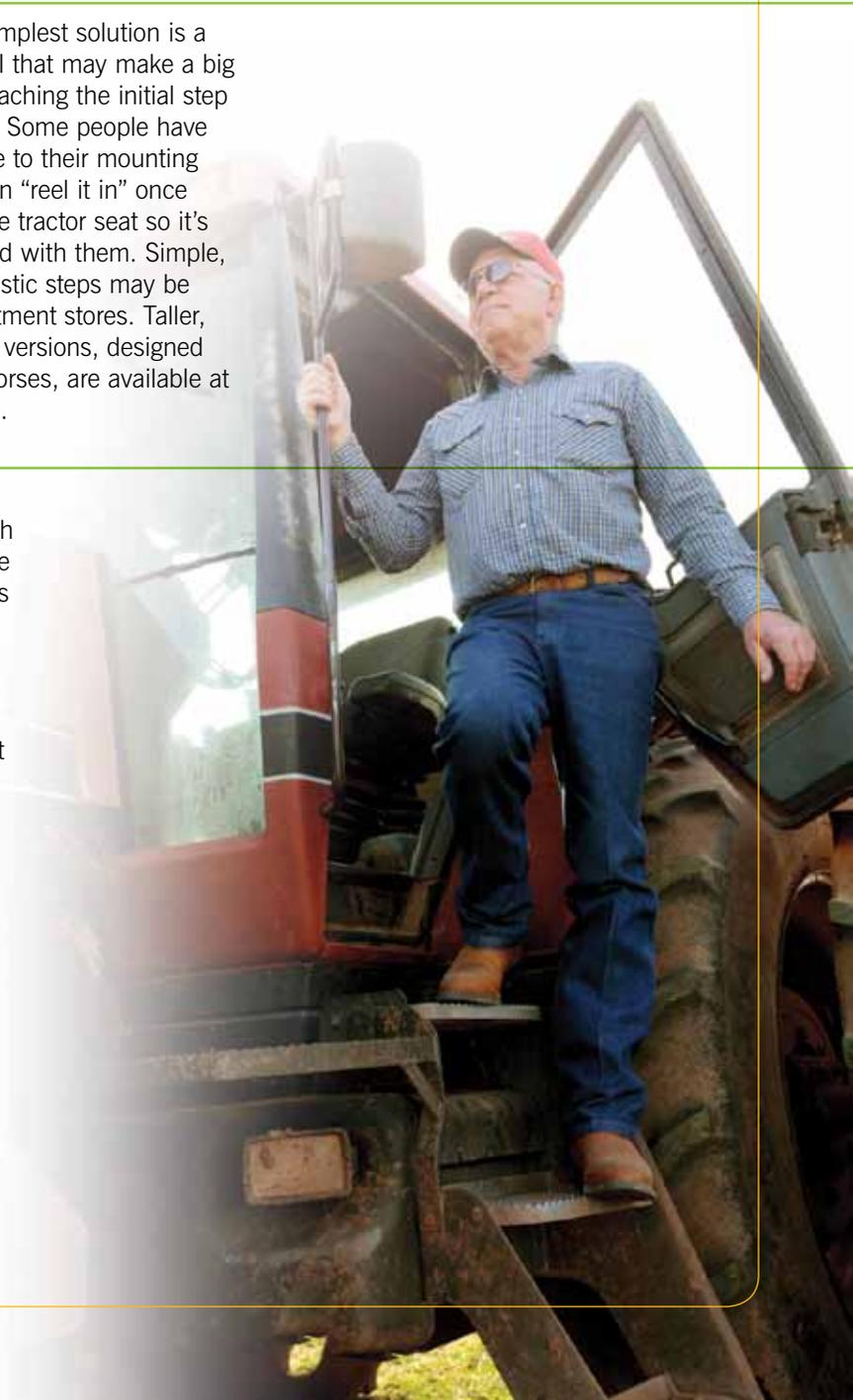
Probably the simplest solution is a small step-stool that may make a big difference in reaching the initial step on your tractor. Some people have attached a rope to their mounting step so they can “reel it in” once they get into the tractor seat so it’s always on board with them. Simple, inexpensive plastic steps may be found at department stores. Taller, more elaborate versions, designed for mounting horses, are available at specialty stores.

Step Kits

Step kits add to or replace existing tractor steps. They can not only reach lower toward the ground, but also are typically wider than the existing steps and may include a handrail. Some major tractor manufacturers make add-on steps or kits compatible with their equipment, but in many cases it’s necessary to find an independent maker of after-market parts like this.

Lifts

Like an elevator for your tractor, a hydraulic lift can provide easier access than any of the above options. The lift may be attached directly to the tractor or can be separate. You can mount a lift on trailers, pickup truck beds, or even mount it on the ground for free-standing support. No matter where the lift is placed, it can provide either a platform or a seat for the user to ride up and down at the push of a button.



UPCOMING WINTER WORKSHOPS:

Colorado AgrAbility will be holding a series of FREE winter workshops around the state this winter to provide information on **“Solutions for Tractor Access and Comfortable Operation.”**

The workshops are open to farm and ranch families with physical difficulties or other challenges and for professionals, including extension agents, occupational therapists, physical therapists, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and county health care professionals. At the conclusion of each workshop, AgrAbility staff will be available for individual consultations.

Register a week in advance to guarantee a free lunch after the workshop.

To register for any of these workshops, contact Dr. Bob Fetsch at 970-491-5648 or Robert.Fetsch@colostate.edu

2011 Workshop Schedule

Steamboat Springs:

Wednesday, January 19, 2011 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Routt County Extension Office
136 6th Street, Courthouse Annex,
Extension Trout Creek Meeting Room
C. J. Mucklow (970) 879-0825

Trinidad:

Tuesday, January 25, 2011 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Trinidad Junior College Sullivan Student Center
600 Prospect Avenue
Dean Oatman (719) 846-6881

Lamar:

Wednesday, January 26, 2011 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Lamar Community College,
Trustee's Building, 2401 South Main
Bruce Fickenscher (719) 438-5321

Pueblo:

Thursday, January 27, 2011 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Pueblo Zoo, 3455 Nuckolis Avenue
Marvin Reynolds (719) 583-6566

Holyoke:

Tuesday, February 8, 2011 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Extension Office Events Center, 22505 Hwy. 385
Dennis Kaan (970) 345-2287

Ft. Morgan:

Wednesday, February 9, 2011 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Ft. Morgan Extension Office, 914 East Railroad Avenue
Bruce Bosley (970) 768-6449

Aurora:

Thursday, February 10, 2011 | 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Arapahoe County Fairgrounds, 25690 East Quincy Avenue
Dale Edwards (303) 730-1920

If you can't make it to one of these, contact us anytime and we'll fill you in on what you missed, and help you take a look at options for your specific situation.

As always, there's no fee for any of our information or services!

About Colorado AgrAbility



Thanks to a partnership with Goodwill Industries of Denver and Colorado State University Extension, the Colorado AgrAbility Project provides on-site evaluations, resource information, disability workshops, and recommendations for equipment modification and assistive technology. The USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture provides funding for the Colorado AgrAbility Project.

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While you might know them for their many retail stores across Colorado, Goodwill is more than just a place for great deals. Goodwill's programs improve our community and help people find the tools they need to be successful in work and life.

Goodwill Industries of Denver's career development and supportive services programs help more than 36,000 individuals in our state to change their lives and the lives of others while building strong and sustainable communities. Goodwill seeks to reverse the cycle of poverty by giving a hand-up, not a hand-out.

The Colorado AgrAbility Project promotes success in agriculture for people with disabilities or other physical challenges and their families. Goodwill plans to continue to support rural communities with AgrAbility services and with the creation of jobs through the opening of new retail stores.

A new store in Fort Morgan will be opening in the spring of 2011.



Colorado State University is the people's university. As your land-grant university, CSU educates through extension, research, and resident instruction. CSUE delivers unbiased, research-based information and effective educational programs to Coloradans and people in the region and across the nation. Extension agents extend the knowledge from CSU to the people to address top priority educational needs.

CSUE partners with Goodwill Industries Denver to bring AgrAbility to you. Our goal is to assist you, your family, friends, and neighbors with illnesses, conditions, disabilities, or other obstacles to continuing to farm or ranch. We have a number of options available to you - information, education, services, and assistive technology - that have assisted many and just might make things a little easier for you on your farm or ranch.

CSUE's newest Extension program is "Managing Tough Times: How Can Your Family Be More Resilient?" In these tough economic times there are steps families can take to make sure that they are positioned to bounce back from tough times and increase the chances that their family is better off.

To learn more about financial, production, and human risk management strategies for you and your family or to find out about workshops, call Bob Fetsch (970-491-5648).

Annual Workshop Energizes Staff

In October, AgrAbility held a national training workshop in Charleston, South Carolina for all state, regional and national project staff to share ideas, best practices and expertise. Our Colorado staff came back reenergized and armed with valuable information to serve farmers and ranchers in this state.

Colorado AgrAbility staff and Goodwill Industries of Denver Director David Cessna, attended the workshop. We had the opportunity to connect with other state projects and learn about how to serve more people and strengthen more communities. Some educational sessions included information on: how to market AgrAbility services, finding funding for AgrAbility clients, providing assistance to farmers and ranchers with disabilities, and technology or modifications that can improve agricultural productivity.

There are grants available for farmers and ranchers who have been served by AgrAbility to attend this annual workshop, please contact us for more information. ➤

Contact Information:

Colorado AgrAbility Project

www.agrability.cahs.colostate.edu

CSU Extension

Dr. Robert (Bob) Fetsch, *AgrAbility Principal Investigator*
970-491-5648

Robert.fetsch@colostate.edu

Goodwill Industries of Denver

Jill Sump, *OTR/L – AgrAbility Project Manager*
303-385-7636

jsump@goodwilldenver.org

Goodwill Industries of Denver

Vince Luke, *AgrAbility Case Manager*
303-385-7386

vluke@goodwilldenver.org



Colorado AgrAbility Project

c/o Goodwill Industries of Denver
6850 Federal Blvd.
Denver, CO 80221

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