



## Tools for Tight Spaces

**Equipment for making hay, doing general farm work and managing manure are available for even the smallest farms.**

While there are countless types of farm machinery on today's market designed to fill most every need, most are designed for spacious fields, roomy barn lots and similarly wide-open spaces. Fortunately, there are also those for us hobby farmers. Let's take a closer look at a few small-farm helpers.

### Small-scale Haying Equipment

Most of us choose not to buy haying equipment because full-sized machinery is so expensive and unwieldy. It hardly makes sense to grapple with costly, cumbersome standard equipment to hay our smaller, hobby-farm fields. But the alternatives aren't always satisfactory either: let the crop go to waste or arrange for custom baling.

Farmers offering custom baling aren't eager to maneuver standard equipment in small spaces, either, and they often charge a premium when they do. Having someone else bale your hay comes with certain risks, too. Will the baler be available when your hay is ready to cut? If rainy weather is in the offing, will he give your job priority or stay home and put up his own hay? If you pay by the bale, will he bale tight, heavy bales or a passel of featherweights? If you hay on shares and part of the hay is rained on, who gets first choice of the bales?

In all, it's best to have your own equipment so you can do the job when (and how) you want it done. Thanks to the continuing evolution of haying equipment, it's possible to do it all yourself.

You can't drive to your nearest machinery dealer and buy this equipment. Mini units available in the United States are manufactured by CAEB and Abbiata of Italy and IHI Star of Japan; each is available through a single primary American distributor. The good news is that distributors gladly ship coast-to-coast.

Two unique, mini haying implements are a baler and bale wrapper built by CAEB and available from Earth Tools of Owenton, Ky.

Designed to be powered by 8.5-horsepower or larger, two-wheeled walk-behind tractors like the ones manufactured by BSC of Italy, the CAEB mini-round-baler was engineered for use in Europe's small and often mountainous hay meadows.

Every 60 seconds or so, it spits out a neat, compact 40- to 60-pound round bale that measures just 21 by 23 inches, bound by UV-resistant nylon mesh, biodegradable mesh or net-wrap. Bales have soft-core centers that allow air to circulate and thus prevent spoilage, while the outside is rolled tightly to shed moisture if the bales are left outside. The unit also produces silage when used in partnership with the CAEB bale wrapper that utilizes 10-inch stretch film to squeeze air out of hay to allow anaerobic fermentation to occur.

Earth Tools also distributes the Molon of Italy side-delivery, walking-tractor-powered hay rake and tedder that both rakes and spreads windrows. These tools are available individually or as complete, ready-to-use haymaking packages.

Abbiata manufactures the Abbiata M50 small round baler for 18-horsepower and larger tractors with center drawbars, lateral drawbars or three-point hitches. It picks up a 33.4-inch swath and puts up 19.7- by 27.5-inch bales weighing 40 to 130 pounds. The M50 comes in twine- or net-wrap models. Partnered with the Abbiata M70 fully automatic mini hay wrapper, it makes small-scale, wrapped-silage making a breeze.

IHI Star's line of mini-haymaking tools includes mini square balers, mini roll balers and the Star Haymaker tedder and rake. Star square balers put up bales 13 by 17 inches in cross section and 12 to 39 inches in length. They come in four models designed for use with 13- to 45-horsepower tractors. Star round balers create 20- by 28-inch bales, work with 18- to 30-horsepower tractors, and come in twine- and net-wrap models. The twine-wrap model MRBO850 puts up an impressive 80 to 120 bales an hour; the net-wrap MRBO860, 100 to 150 bales an hour.

### Skid Steers

Another great tool with a place on all farms is the versatile skid steer. Invented in 1957 by Cyril and Louis Keller of Rothsay, Minn., to remove manure from a turkey barn, they're now built by most major machinery manufacturers including Bobcat, John Deere, Caterpillar, Case, New Holland, Vermeer and Gehl.



Although some skid steers are equipped with tracks, most are rigid-frame, four-wheel-drive vehicles in which the right-side drive wheels work independently of the left-side drive wheels. They're capable of zero-radius turns, making them wonderfully maneuverable and ideal for use in small, tight places such as barn aisles and loafing sheds.

Furthermore, they can be fitted with a huge array of attachments, making them the small-farm tool of choice for cleaning barns, feeding livestock, digging holes, and moving snow, hay and feed. Because they move so quickly, it's important to use these versatile tools with care. (See "Operate with Care".)

So many companies build skid steers in a mindboggling array of sizes and types that it's hard to pick out a few to spotlight. Chances are your favorite machinery and implement dealer carries them, so stop by and see what they have on hand.

When many folks think skid steer, they visualize Bobcat, one of the industry's oldest and largest skid-steer manufacturers. Bobcat has been building skid loaders for 50 years. The company currently offers 12 models with scores of options and 59 attachments ranging from augers, backhoes and bale-fork attachments to unusual items like whisker push-brooms and vibratory rollers. For really small spaces, consider the Bobcat S70 Skid Steer Loader—only 6 feet tall and 3 feet wide with a 23.5-horsepower, liquid-cooled, diesel engine.

New Holland's Model L120 is another outstanding skid steer ideal for today's small farm. Its 18-horsepower Kohler CH18 engine, compact size and 600-pound operating capacity make it a first choice for hauling feed and cleaning barns.

For more horsepower, try a larger skid steer like Caterpillar's 216B Series 2 Skid Steer Loader. Features include a Cat C2.2 engine, advanced hydraulic system and world-class operator station with intuitive S-control pattern joysticks and high-efficiency comfort controls.

John Deere builds seven skid-steer models, including the beefy, 62-horsepower diesel, turbocharged Model 320 Skid Steer. Its patented vertical-lift boom provides exceptional load stability and lift-height, while 60/40 weight distribution, low center of gravity, long wheelbase and high ground clearance deliver balance and agility.

#### Mini Manure Spreaders

One last must-have tool for tight places is a mini manure spreader. These handy items neatly maneuver down barn aisles, and the smallest models can squeeze through standard 4-foot doors.

The Newer Spreader is in a class of its own. Unlike standard manure spreaders, this one resembles a hopper on wheels. Its patented grinding drum crumbles dry manure into tiny particles that decompose quickly once spread. Standard model 100 Newer Spreaders handle 8 cubic feet of material; the new model 200 Newer Spreader, 13 cubic feet.

Newer Spreaders work best for spreading plain or composted manure and manure mixed with sawdust, shavings or pelleted bedding but not straw bedding or bedding mixed with large amounts of hay. Either ground-driven Newer Spreader can be pulled with a small garden tractor, ATV or utility vehicle.

Millcreek and Loyal-Roth build an array of small spreaders, including ground-driven models tailored for the one- to four-horse farm. Millcreek's Model 27+ Equine Manure Spreader packs a 22.5-bushel load; Loyal-Roth's Model MS23B Compact Manure Spreader, 23 bushels.

These are scaled-down farm implements fabricated of steel and built to resemble full-sized spreaders. Pull them with garden tractors, utility vehicles and ATVs. And, Millcreek's beefy Model 57 Equine Manure Spreader comes in ground-driven and enhanced-PTO models for folks with up to 10 horses. It spreads 56 cubic feet of manure—that's 9.3 wheelbarrow loads—and needs only an 18-horsepower tractor or ATV to do it.

If you're not sure what size to buy, consider whether you'd rather make one trip out to the field or four. If time matters, choose the biggest spreader suitable for your barn, your tractor or ATV, and your budget. Keep in mind that compact spreaders are designed to fling dried manure; even full-sized spreaders clog with wet, goopy material, so expect these mighty mites to do the same.

For a list of where to find the tools mentioned in this article, [click here](#).

About the authors: John and Sue Weaver have been hobby farming and home buying for more than 20 years.



This article first appeared in July/August 2009 Hobby Farms.

#### Tools for Tight Spaces

Equipment for making hay, doing general farm work and managing manure are available for even the smallest farms