



FARM HACKS

Farm Hacks Left to Right: Emergency kidding pen, PVC pipe grain and mineral feeder, old car seat to hold a busy toddler while parents work the farm, DIY hay feeder, and an old stall mat mineral feeder.

by *Christina Morris*

If you were asked to think back to the 1980s to name a television series that you remember, what would it be? You may recall *MacGyver*. The main character, MacGyver, was a typical guy, but what set him apart was that he knew a lot about chemistry, physics, and many other sciences. According to MacGyver, “There always seems to be a way to fix things.” We may think of MacGyver as the man that could solve any problem with minimal or unexpected tools and supplies, however, farmers and ranchers are “MacGyvers” as well! I recently requested farmers and ranchers just like you, share some of their “MacGyver” solutions. Keep reading to find ideas that may work for you and your operation as well.

Shelby shared, “If twine won’t work... duct tape or zip ties will!” Like Shelby, many, if not most, of you know that twine, duct tape, and zip ties are important staples in the farm tool kit. On our farm, we have used zip ties to connect metal panels to create emergency kidding pens during drastically cold weather and to connect cattle panels together to create makeshift catch pens in the field.

Several goat breeders shared multiple ways that they warm chilled newborn kids. Vicki shared that she uses a cardboard box with a blow dryer as an incubator when she has a newborn that is too cold. Mr. Lohmon shared that he places chilled kids in a trash bag, making sure not to cover the newborn’s head, and then sets them in a sink of hot water to warm them up. He says that the trash bag keeps the scent on the newborn so that the mother will take it back, and that it’s the fastest and easiest way to warm chilled kids. Another goat breeder shared that he uses human heating pads or heating blankets to wrap cold kids in.

Vicki also shared that she has used a clothes basket with a rope

Do you have a farm hack that you would like to share? If so, send it to Kelley Yates at kyates@kysheepandgoat.org

to bring new kids to the barn in bad weather. She explained, “cause you know that momma goat can’t see those babies when you pick them up. So we put them in the basket to make sure she sniffs and we pull them along and she follows.”

Ethan George shared his weather proof mineral feeder made out of scrap wood and an old stall mat. Others shared that they use PVC pipe to create grain and mineral feeders and even to cast a broken leg. Several goat breeders also mentioned using PVC pipe attached to a goat’s horns to keep it from getting its head stuck in fencing.

Most farmers use what they already have on the farm to meet needs that arise. When we couldn’t find a hay feeder to meet our needs, my husband built one out of recycled cattle panels and some leftover lumber that we had on hand. Another use we found for cattle panels on our farm is for creating a self-feeding dog feeder that the goats cannot get into.

A few more farm hacks that were shared included using recycled everyday supplies that most everyone has around. For example, holding on to those mismatched socks and old worn out t-shirts to use for farm rags; using 2 liter soda bottles as funnels by

cutting off the bottom of the bottle; and using old take-out plastic containers with clear lids to start seeds in. Another suggestion was to keep old coffee tins to organize clamps, fittings, and screws.

Agriculture is a family affair and doesn't stop when kids arrive. One suggestion was to keep an extra child car seat handy to help contain a toddler when everyone in the family is needed for a farm task. Chasing a toddler around while trying to work livestock, doing field work, or running errands on the farm can be a challenge. Keeping an extra car seat handy can be a game changer.

Now for a few extra Farm Hacks with instructions to help out around your farm.

Gate Stake

Holds the gate open or allows free swing. Attach two gate hinge brackets to the gate then use a 1/2" rod to hold the gate in place when open. Bend a handle on top and hook it over a gate tube to allow gate to free swing.



Barn Door Slide

Prevent sliding door from pushing out at the bottom and also keep it from rubbing on the barn siding when opening.

Attach a 1-1/2" angle to bottom door frame. Cut it 3" shorter than door so it can be hooked or unhooked when the door is fully open.

Bend a "hook" out of 2" flat stock and bolt it to the floor.



Post Auger Stand

Keep your post auger off the ground. Make it easier to mount/unmount from tractor.

Set two 4"x4" posts then cut another piece to sit on top. Cut the posts so the cross piece is about 3" or 4" shorter than the maximum height your tractor will lift auger.

Bolt metal straps to each post (total of 4 straps). Drill a hole through the top 4"x4" and slide a pin through metal straps and 4"x4".

To use simply back your tractor between posts and lift auger fully. Slide cross piece under auger frame and pin in place. Then lower auger onto cross piece and disconnect from tractor. Reverse procedure to mount auger to tractor.



Do you have a farm hack that you would like to share? If so, send it to Kelley Yates at kyates@kysheepandgoat.org

Christina Morris, along with her husband, Jason, own and operate Blessed Acres Farm in Crofton, KY. With the help of their two teenage boys, Micah and Eli, they raise registered and commercial Kiko goats and Akbash livestock guardian dogs.