Chopped Hay Feeder for Sheep

By George Przyb and Morty Lipson

The feeding of chopped hay has been found to be a convenient method of handling hay in sheep feedlots. Sheep consume the hay readily in this form, with very little waste. See these reasons, the system of feeding hay is gaining popularity with sheep feeders.

To feed hay in this form, it is necessary to use a feeder that will keep the short lengths of hay from spilling out of the feeder where it will be wasted. To meet this requirement, a feeder was constructed and put into operation on the North Dakota Agricultural College Farm during the winter of 1951-52. Since that time, two others of the same design have been put into operation. The hay is stored in bales and is chopped into the feeders as it is needed.

A major problem in the design of chopped hay feeders is the fact that chopped hay tends to arch over in a storage box. As a result, the hay will not feed down freely into the feed troughs and it becomes necessary to force it down by hand. This feeder is designed with a slight taper from the top to the bottom. This provides a sidewalk that helps to reduce the arching of the chopped hay. Less assistance is required, therefore, to keep the hay feeding down into the troughs.

Twelve foot and 16 foot feeders are in use on the college farm. The accompanying plan is for a 12 foot feeder. The feeders are built on skids for portability. Two-inch planks spiked to the skids form the floor. The studs are nailed square to the skids and fastened at each end. This provides the tapered wall. The sides are then nailed to the floor and are held in position at the top by the 2 x 4 plate; 2 x 4 ties and the 2 x 4 rafters maintain the proper width at the top of the feeder.

The ends of the feeder are sealed with shingles. The side walls are lined on the inside with 1/4" exterior grade plywood. Sheets of plywood four feet wide by ten feet long can be cut to fit the sides most economically. Sheets three feet, two inches by four feet are needed to cover the space between one pair of studs. Three of these can be obtained from one of the 4 x 10 plywood sheets.

Eight penny box nails spaced about four inches apart should be used to nail the plywood in place. The plywood applied in this way will act as effective bracing. This will prevent the feeders from becoming extremely rigid. This rigidity can be increased even more if waterproof glue is used in addition to the nails for applying the plywood.

Exterior grade plywood sheets four feet wide by eight feet long and one-half inch thick should be nailed securely to one side of the side walls and on the under side of the roof. The other side of the roof should be split at four feet intervals. Every other section is held in place by strap hinges. These sections act as doors that provide the openings for filling the feeder.

A 2 x 6 plank spiked in place forms the trough side. A 1" x 8" board closes the trough end. This forms a trough of the proper height and size for the sheep to eat with ease.