



Winter 2002

## FEATURING:

Hitching Without a Hitch

Midwest Ag Expo -  
Wisconsin

Upcoming Events

National AgrAbility  
Training Grant comes to  
Wisconsin

Unloading Grain or  
Feed Bins Can Be  
Hazardous

Partners: Wisconsin  
Rural Partnership  
honors AgrAbility of  
Wisconsin.

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AgrAbility of Wisconsin

# Plowing Ahead

## Hitching Without a Hitch

Hitching and unhitching power units like tractors, self-propelled forage harvesters, and trucks can be awkward and dangerous to farmers. For farmers with disabilities, the simple process of hitching and unhitching equipment can become a barrier for their farm work.

When one operator uses conventional hitching equipment without help, the operator must climb in and out of the power unit a few times to align and hitch the equipment. For farmers with disabilities such as arthritis, amputations, back injuries, muscle weakness, visual impairments or poor balance, this task is challenging if not impossible. When hitching with two people, one person operates the power unit while another person usually stands in a dangerous position between the power unit and the implement. This creates risk of serious injury (e.g. a crushed limb) to the person on the ground.

### A BETTER WAY

Automated hitching systems allow an operator to do the hitching from his or her seat and without a second person stationed between the power unit and the implement. Automatic hitching can be completed safely and quickly with less labor than conventional hitching. It also decreases the risk of secondary injuries to farmers with disabilities, for example, a farmer with a back injury is no longer required to lift the heavy wagon tongue during hitching.

There are many different sizes and brands of automated hitches for both three-point and drawbar equipment. Please call AgrAbility of Wisconsin at (608) 262-9336 if you would like more information.

Automated three-point hitches



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**Automated Drawbar hitches usually consist of a tractor and a wagon or implement part which are attached with bolts or pins, making it relatively easy for the farmer to move them from tractor to tractor or wagon to wagon. The tractor part of most drawbar hitches can also be attached to self-propelled harvesters, balers and trucks.**

**Check out National AgrAbility Project's website [www.agrabilityusa.org](http://www.agrabilityusa.org) for technical information on specific brands and hydraulic couplers.**

## **Midwest Ag Expo – Wisconsin**

**Stop by the AgrAbility of Wisconsin booth and say "Hi" at the Midwest Equipment Dealers Association's Midwest Ag Expo at the Alliant Center in Madison, Wisconsin on March 13 & 14, 2002. The booth will be located at the North end of the lobby in the Exhibition hall.**

**Midwest Equipment Dealers Association is offering the following seminars during the expo: "Health Insurance for the Farm Community"**

presented by **John Smylie**, Chief Administrative Officer of the Security Health Plan of Wisconsin, Inc. (SHP). SHP is owned by Marshfield Clinic, home to the National Farm Medicine Center. The purpose of the seminar is to have attendees understand the basic health insurance products available in most markets and the reasons for rising costs. (9:30 a.m. Wednesday & 1:30 p.m. Thursday.)

**"The Truth and Good News About Ethanol"**

presented by **Gary Kramer**, President, Badger State Ethanol. This program is designed to educate attendees about Ethanol, its impact on agriculture and the environment, and how it will affect the industry. (11:00 a.m. Wednesday & Thursday.)

**"Wisconsin Women for Agriculture: Working together for Impact and Influence"**

presented by **Wisconsin Women in Agriculture**. Discussion will center on the importance of the involvement of women in state and national agriculture and commodity boards and in the political arena. (1:30 p.m. Wednesday & 9:30 a.m. on Thursday.)



### **Plowing Ahead**

Editor and Layout designer:

Jessica Danziger

Published by AgrAbility of Wisconsin.

Please direct inquiries to:

#### **AgrAbility of Wisconsin**

460 Henry Mall

Madison, WI 53706

(608)262-9336 Voice

(608)262-1228 Fax

<http://bse.wisc.edu/agrability>

### **Look for us at the following upcoming events:**

#### **Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin Annual Business Conference**

March 5-6, 2002

Alliant Energy Center

Madison, Wisconsin

#### **42nd Annual Wisconsin Public Service Farm Show**

March 26 – 28, 2002

Brown County Veterans Memorial

Green Bay, Wisconsin

## Unloading Grain or Feed Bins Can Be Hazardous

Winter increases risk to farmers because it is a time for unloading and selling grain from grain bins. While a bin may not appear very threatening, being inside the bin at the wrong time can result in death. Workers unloading both grain and feed bins must be aware of the life-threatening hazards that exist.

“Being in a grain bin during unloading is like being in quicksand,” says Mark Purschwitz, University of Wisconsin-Extension agricultural safety and health specialist. “A person can become helpless in less than five seconds, and be completely submerged in as little as 20 seconds, leading to suffocation.”

Purschwitz says that nobody should be allowed inside a bin while it is being unloaded, not even to stand near the side. Anyone standing inside the bin during unloading risks being pulled down into the grain and becoming completely submerged, resulting in suffocation and death.

If you must enter a grain or feed bin, make sure the unloading auger is shut off and the power is locked out so that it cannot be turned back on by someone else. Also lock out any automatic circuitry, such as found on an automatic grain dryer fed from a wet grain holding bin.

A similar entrapment phenomenon occurs in gravity-unloading grain wagons. A child or other person in the wagon during unloading will be pulled down and under the grain, often resulting in suffocation. Please ensure that no one is in the wagon or on top of the grain when a wagon is being unloaded.

“Sometimes people unload some grain, realize there is a crust, and go inside to break up the



crust. Then the crust collapses, the person falls into the empty cavity below, created when the grain was unloaded, and gets covered by an avalanche of grain.”

Purschwitz says that if any grain has been unloaded, or there is any risk of empty cavities in the grain, the proper and safe way to break up a crust is to stay outside the bin and use a long pole from one of the hatches.

Sometimes people will clean out a bin or silo with old grain stuck to the walls, knocking it down from below, and end up being submerged when it all comes down on them. “Grain will come down without any warning, and people have died this way,” Purschwitz says. “The safest way to break up grain on the walls is with a long pole, from a hatch above or through the side door, so that when the grain lets loose, you will not be under it.”

Purschwitz notes that vacuum-type grain movers must be used with caution. “There has been at least one case where a person was standing on top of a grain pile and (the vacuum type unloader) removed grain fast enough from where they were standing that they were pulled down into the grain.”

While deaths due to grain entrapment are more common in states where grain production is the primary type of agriculture, Wisconsin has seen its share of deaths. In the 10-year period from 1991 to 2000, eight people in Wisconsin died on farms from being entrapped by grain or feed in bins, open storages, or wagons. At least one additional person died from grain entrapment at a commercial facility.

*Partners...*

**Wisconsin Rural Partner's recognized AgrAbility of Wisconsin at their November 2001 Summit for being one of the top 10 Rural Development Initiatives during 2001. Wisconsin Rural Partners' mission is to engage rural partners to identify issues, and through**



From Left to right: Wisconsin State Representative and AgrAbility of Wisconsin Board Member, Al Ott; Paul Leverenz, Director of Easter Seals Wisconsin Resource Center for Farmers with Disabilities; Sue Burtch, Easter Seals Wisconsin Board Member; and Ron Schuler, AgrAbility of Wisconsin's Program Director.



**AgrAbility of Wisconsin  
460 Henry Mall**