

Mobile paddock provides pasture alternatives

by Hugh Maynard

Tinkering in his Pleasant Grove, PEI workshop has become more than a hobby for Vince Court over the years. Devoted today to the full-scale manufacture of wood chip furnaces, he still manages to keep some beef cattle which, from time to time, gives him ideas to tinker with. Court's latest creation is a mobile paddock for cattle. A metal-framed square of about 20 by 20 feet, the unit is designed to hold up to six medium sized cattle. Mounted on small rubber-tired wheels, the animals enter through one side of the square which swings open.

Counting on cattle's natural inclination to lean through a fence to reach the greener grass on the other side, the lateral bars of the cage are separated enough to allow each animal to place their head through the wall. As the cattle extend the reach of their neck for fresh grass, their shoulders press against the bars and slowly push the unit forward.

Court says that it doesn't take the cattle long to figure out that there is fresh grass to be had by giving the wall a bit of a push. He notes that if there are several animals in the unit, some lean forward to graze while others are content to clean up the grass within the cage; crowding at the front wall has not been a problem.

He says that the cage is particularly handy for being able to keep a sick animal outside and still keep an eye on it. Buckets of water or grain can also be easily attached to the wall.

Court adds that the units can also be used to keep a freshened cow together with her young calf, bulls separated from the rest of the herd, and groups of young animals out to pasture for the first time, all without having to spend time fixing up extra pasture space. The units can also be used to clean up unfenced hay fields and bits and pieces of pastureland that would too troublesome to fence otherwise.

