

Do-It-Yourself Cab Kits

Torn seats, ripped ceiling panels, and insulation that no longer insulates are a fact of life with any well-used tractor cab. But there are do-it-yourself kits on the market that will bring an old cab back to like-new condition.

"Farmers are fixing up old stuff, rather than buying new," says Kim Mulder, co-owner of K&M Manufacturing. The Renville, Minn., company has been in the business of restoring cab interiors since 1990. During their busy spring season, they send out 40 to 50 cab kits per day.

Hy-Capacity Engineering and Manufacturing, Dayton, Iowa, also reports fast-growing demand for cab kits. They entered the cab kit business in 1998. The company ships out around 100 kits per day during peak season. Plant manager Cindy Danielson says sales have nearly doubled in the past year.

"Dealers have told us a refurbished cab can increase resale value from \$500 to \$1,500 and can be the thing that pushes the sale," says Danielson.

Safety also plays a role for many farmers. As cabs age and wear, sound insulation quality deteriorates. Danielson says their kits are all produced to original equipment manufacturer (OEM) specifications, including OEM sound levels. "A new cab interior can bring sound levels down to OSHA's 85 decibel standard."

While both companies have patterns for many popular tractor cabs, unusual orders can be filled, too. You may have to send in the

worn out pieces or provide exact specifications so a pattern can be made. If neither is possible, the companies may find a local version of the cab and create a pattern from it. Bulk material can also be ordered for those who want to create their own. Kits can be ordered in the original OEM color and thickness or customized as the buyer wishes.

Preparation for the new kits is simple. Just remove the old pieces once the new ones have arrived. Make mental notes or jot down how the old elements were positioned as they are removed. Directions and adhesives are included in the kits.

The two companies offer other accessories, including steps, tool boxes and other items. Hy-Capacity offers a Side Kick passenger seat that fits all Deere 8000 and 9000 Series tractors with the deluxe cab and under-seat tool box. However, Danielson reports that her 14-year-old son easily modified it to fit another tractor model as well.

"It is very easy to install and bolts to existing holes in the cab," says Danielson. "The Side Kick has a capacity of 350 pounds and comes complete with a safety belt."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Hy-Capacity Eng. & Mfg. Inc., Box 156, Highway 169 South, Humbolt, Iowa 50548 (ph 515 333-2125; fax 515 332-1512; Website: www.hy-capacity.com).

Or, K&M Manufacturing, Box 409, 308 NW 2nd Street, Renville, Minn. 56284 (ph 800 328-1752; fax 320 329-3301; E-mail: sales@tractorseats.com; Website: www.tractorseats.com).



Photo shows a tractor cab before it was restored with a K & M do-it-yourself cab kit.



Refurbished cab can increase resale value an average of \$500 to \$1,500, says company.

Michigan Couple Became "Tractor Tourists"

The idea of taking a cross-country tractor ride prompted Bill Bierman, Riga, Michigan to buy a used JCB Fastrac tractor last year.

Bierman and his wife, Linda, like to travel and happened to be in Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1998 when Glen and Betty Martin rolled into town on a 1950 John Deere tractor after about 90 days on the road from their farm at Dalton, Ohio. (See FARM SHOW's Vol. 23, No. 2). The Martins spent a total of 126 days on the road and logged 4,502 miles.

"I thought that sounded like the trip of a lifetime," Bierman remembers. But he didn't like the idea of making it on an older tractor or even on a newer regular farm tractor.

When he heard the European-built JCB Fastrac was for sale, he checked the particulars on the machine and found it was just what he needed for a comfortable tractor drive across the country. JCB began making farm tractors a few years ago. The design is based on a survey of what European farmers wanted in a future farm tractor. Bierman gets parts and service from a dealer in Ohio.

"The tractor has a Cummins diesel engine in it like the ones used in Dodge pickups. It has an extra-wide cab and seat designed for two people to ride comfortably, with all the climate control and comfort features you'd find in a car or pickup," he says. "And it has a 30-speed transmission, designed for both heavy field work and higher speed towing, with a top road speed of about 42 miles per hour. It also has an air-activated clutch and other features normally associated with small commercial trucks."

Though it was used, Bierman says the tractor was just like new, with only about 2,000 hours on it. "It had been used mostly for hauling poultry manure several miles from the poultry houses to fields where it



Bill Bierman and his wife, Linda, drove this JCB Fastrac tractor all the way from Michigan to Nebraska, hauling a 42-ft. semi trailer loaded with equipment. They were able to average better than 35 mph even with the trailer.

could be applied," he says.

He bought the tractor about 200 miles from his home and drove it back to Riga, averaging about better than 35 mph on the trip. Bierman then began planning his first long distance trip on it.

"Our son and his family had moved from Michigan to central Nebraska, where they operate a dairy farm," he says. "We had a tractor, some machinery and a pickup truck he wanted, but had not been able to pick up, so I decided we'd take it all to him."

It wasn't until Bierman started loading the pickup and machinery onto a 42-ft. semi trailer, borrowed from a friend, that his wife Linda realized he was serious about driving the tractor to Nebraska. "She wasn't sure about going along on the tractor, but she couldn't pass up the opportunity to see the grandkids," Bierman says.

He planned a route that kept him on county, state and lesser-traveled federal highways most of the way. "It's a great way to see the country," he says. "You can see so much more travelling at slower speeds and away from the interstate highways."

A forced detour for road construction in Iowa put them onto a four-lane limited access highway with higher speed traffic for about 10 miles, but Bierman says he had no trouble maintaining the 40 mph minimum speed with the JCB.

"We were concerned about getting stopped by the highway patrol, so we made sure everything was legal before leaving home," he says. The tractor was already equipped to activate the air brakes on the trailer, and they were within all length and width regulations.

Despite pulling down to 20 mph on some of the hills, the tractor was still able to average

better than 35 miles per hour with the trailer behind it. And putting in 8 to 10 hours a day on the tractor, they were able to travel from Riga to their son's farm near Arnold, Nebraska, in just three days.

Bierman says three days on the tractor was enough for Linda, though, and they returned home by car with friends. He went back to Nebraska a couple of months later by bus to retrieve the tractor with his brother-in-law. They loaded the trailer with five used windmills from a Nebraska dealer and then made a more leisurely return trip through parts of South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

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