

A not-quite Swedish Hayrack

Peter Hardman

I've been using this style of rack since I started keeping sheep. My recipe is as follows:

Take an 8'x4' sheet of 12mm ply, Tanalised for preference. Cut two feet off the end, leaving a sheet 6' x 4'. Cut two 12" x 6' strips off this, leaving a piece 2' x 6'. Cut the 2' x 4' piece into four 12" x 2' pieces.

Now take four 3' lengths of tanalised 2"x4" timber, sanded to remove any rough surfaces and screw the two 12" x 6' lengths to the 4" faces and the two 12" x 2' pieces to the short faces to make an open box, leaving about 4" protruding below the sides of the box to keep it off the ground. Screw some lengths of 2"x2" to the edges of the box to provide supports for the base and then screw the base (the 6' x 2' piece of ply) to the 2" x 2". You then have a box with the floor 6" off the ground and 10" deep. Nail two lengths of half-round fencing rail across the 'feet' (on short sides of box) to stop them sinking into the ground.

Screw lengths of 2"x1" tanalised timber (slate batten comes in this size) to the corner posts about 10" above the top of the box to stop the sheep climbing in. Make a lid from a sheet of corrugated iron, with curved ends cut from whatever you have.* Fix to the corner posts with coach screws on one long side and bolts on the other.

I've always used A184 (or is it 184A) reinforcing fabric to hold the hay down. It comes in big sheet from the builder's merchants and is 1/4" steel rod on an 8" square mesh. I find the sheep much happier being able to burrow for the 'good' bits (which are always at the bottom of course!) than being forced to pick at it through small mesh. The smallest I tried was 3", and they hated it.

With the bits of ply left over and another sheet of ply and the rest of the makings you can make an 8' long version.

I've put 8" wheels at one end of each of my racks (I've got five or six of them) so they are easier to move. Don't put wheels both ends or the sheep will push them round the field.

They have other uses of course:

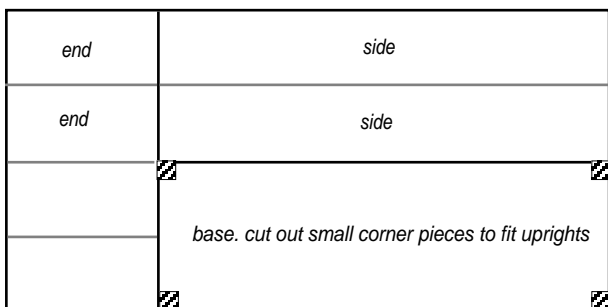
Shelter for lambs in the spring - outside to start with, but put some straw inside and you will soon have 'rack of lamb' - trough full of lambs keeping nice and dry with mums keeping their heads dry as well.

Take the lid off, replace the side rails with half round fencing rails, tie the mesh down with chain and clips and you have cattle hay racks.

They also make nice toys for the bull to roll round the field....

My oldest ones are over ten years old - getting a bit sad now as they were made from second-hand untreated timber.

*Peter Hardman
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cutting the 8X4

* you need to make the roof to overhang a bit front & back.



two hayboxes in use, showing small wheels at one end



filling the haybox, on snowy ground. Showing the reinforcing material that is used to hold the hay down.
all photos Peter Hardman