

COMMENT

If we have another snowstorm, just blame me

By Ted Brown
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A Ted Bit

Watching the snow disappear, and the dirty bare ground reappear, it's a pretty good bet that spring-like weather is making its way across southern Ontario.

But, as we all know, there is still that remote chance we could have another snowstorm, just for old time's sake, one last kick at the cat, so to speak.

On our farm, (a farm with a very long lane,) snow removal is paramount. I need to get rid of a lot of snow in a relatively short time. I use two tractors— one with a front end loader, the other with a snow blower.

As we all know, tractors are designed primarily to 'push' or 'pull' things, and those big heavy lugged tires we see on field tractors do the job quite well on dry ground.

But in winter, they're virtually useless when it comes snow or ice, (unless of course the tractor is equipped with four-wheel drive.)

All my tractors are two-wheel drive. I can echo my forefathers, and make bold claims like "With our light gravel soil and not too many hills, we don't need four-wheel drive tractors on this farm, blah, blah, blah..."

Translation: "Damn I wish I had a four-wheel drive tractor but they're either too expensive, or I'm too cheap to spend the money on one."

So I opt for another solution, which is probably as good, maybe 'gooder' than four-wheel drive, when it comes to traction on snow and ice.

I use tire chains.

Most people aren't really familiar with tire chains. Unless you watch 'Ice Road Truckers' where the boys 'chain up' whenever they hit some icy mountain pass in northern British Columbia, tire chains are fairly rare around here.

But on the farm, they're pretty much a necessity.

Tire chains can also be nasty things. They're

heavy and dirty to put on the tractor, and as soon as it gets mild in the spring, they chew up the soft ground and make a huge mess.

So late last week, as I walked to the barn, taking in the world around me, I noticed the ground was not only bare, but frozen quite firm. It was perfect for spreading sheep manure on the back field.

I opened the shed, and fired up the two tractors— one equipped with the loader, the other hitched to the manure spreader. I pulled out of the shed, and saw the big ruts the tractor was leaving on the ground, compliments of those tire chains.

Impulsively, I disconnected the chains. As I pulled ahead, they dropped to the ground. That's the easy part. (Putting them on is the challenge.)

Whenever I drop the chains off, I imagine the tractor breathing a huge sigh of relief like some old work horse, as they thud to the ground.

Okay, I was living on the edge. That action might well cause Mother Nature to say 'I'll show him...'

Years ago, I pulled an equally rash move, removing snow tires from the 'Lil Red Rocket waaaay too early.

"More snow? Nah, we're not gonna see any more snow until December..." I proclaimed.

Waking to a six-inch covering of snow two days later, I've become more careful making such bold claims.

But I did take advantage of that frozen field, and the manure pile is out before the ground becomes soft. It was worth the risk. And my tractors are back in the shed, out of sight of Mother Nature's prying eyes.

But, just for the record, if the old girl happens to ask— as far as you know, the chains are back on the tractors... (wink).

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