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Shield Protects Machinery From Rodents

Rodent Shield Systems is the result of the knowledge and hands-on experience of Cheetah Electronics Ltd., a family-owned business in Ireland with over 50 years of manufacturing agricultural electric fencing.

"The idea for the Rodent Shield System came from the constant complaints from farmers about the damage that rodents were causing to their farm machinery, vintage cars and other equipment," says system inventor Padraic George. "These pests frequently chew wiring looms, insulation and hydraulic lines in machines that sit idle during winter storage, which leads to costly downtime."

Traditional control methods, such as poison, traps or cats, only help reduce the rodent population without truly preventing access to valuable equipment. Recognizing this gap, George introduced a physical, electrified barrier designed to keep unwanted animals out. The system acts as a deterrent, stopping rodents from entering machinery and causing damage.

The Rodent Shield System consists of modular, electrified panels that form a closed perimeter around machinery or storage areas. Each panel delivers a strong, electrified pulse every second. When pests try to cross, they receive a shock that stuns and deters them. This single negative experience helps ensure they won't return, thanks to their neophobic tendencies and ability to learn from unpleasant encounters. The system acts as both a

psychological and physical deterrent, protecting against mice, rats, pine martens, raccoons and other mammals that threaten machinery.

Designed to be scalable and flexible, the panels easily connect to create any desired length. The fence can be opened for moving equipment in and out. Powered by a 5-joule electric fence energizer, the system works indoors and outdoors, adapting to various weather conditions. The panels can be secured to concrete or wood to ensure stability against wind.

"Rodent Shield Systems have proven to be 100% effective when installed correctly, with early adopters reporting no further rodent damage to their machinery," George says. "The product has been primarily sold online, but we recently expanded through a partnership with Ellens Equipment, an agricultural dealership in Michigan. Customers can now purchase the system directly or through the dealership's stores and website."

Priced at approximately \$16 to \$17 per foot, a typical 100 ft. bundle, large enough to surround a combine harvester, costs about \$1,999. This price includes the energizer, panels and all necessary hardware.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rodent Shield Systems (rodentshieldsystems@gmail.com; www.rodentshieldsystems.com) or Ellens Equipment (ph 231-825-2416; ellens@ellensequipment.com; www.ellensequipment.com).



"Every time we get a national news story, it attracts potential buyers like bakers in New York," Larsen says.

Group Grows And Processes Oats

Upper Midwest farmers frustrated by a lack of markets for oats are establishing their own markets and a processing facility. Known as the Oat Mafia, these farmers grew 6,000 acres of oats in Minnesota and surrounding states in 2025. While that's a tiny fraction of the total crop acres in the five states, it's a growing fraction.

"This year, we expect to increase acres by 25 to 30%," says Martin Larsen, co-founder. "We have some first-time growers, while many of our current members are expanding

their acres."

Larsen and other members of the Oat Mafia are among 136 investors in Green Acres Milling. The processing plant under construction in Albert Lea, Minn., is planned to process up to 4 million bushels of oats annually.

The goal is to fill a processing gap left by large agricultural companies and aggregated production, mainly in Canada. It'll create a new market for regional oats and a source of domestically produced oat products for the supply chain. Products will include oat



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Fireweed Has Many Uses

Fireweed, a native perennial found throughout Western North America, truly lives up to its name. This hardy tundra flower is among the first to colonize a landscape after a disaster. It often creates a vibrant floral carpet following forest fires and quickly covered the Cascades after the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens.

The plant is among 200 members of the Evening Primrose family. It grows on both sides of the Cascades crest and along the Washington coast. Fireweed is called a pioneer species because it can adapt to different soil types and environments. Bees, butterflies and other pollinators rely on its flowers during times of scarcity.

Thanks to its vigorous spreading habit, Fireweed often becomes the dominant species in burned areas until trees and large shrubs return. You'll find the plant in both moist and dry disturbed areas, including clearings, roadsides and burn sites. It's not picky about its elevation.

Fireweed is best known for its 6-ft. stems that boast 50 or more purplish flowers. Petals are egg-shaped and less than an inch long. Each stem has multiple flowers, complemented by thin, willowy leaves.

These flowers can last for weeks, and honeybees will turn their nectar into a white, spicy honey. Eventually, the flowers become long, cylindrical capsules of silky fluff that release seeds by wind once they open. The plants are remarkably prolific, producing up

to 80,000 seeds per plant each year.

Fireweed fibers, seeds and stems all serve multiple purposes for Indigenous Americans. The plant is high in vitamins C and A, and the young stems taste similar to asparagus. Pacific Northwest tribes have traditionally eaten the young stems and shoots raw, blanched, boiled or steamed. After roasting and mashing, the root can be used as a poultice for skin boils, and infusions of dried leaves act as a laxative. Fibers from the leaves even have potential for making fishing nets.

Bears, deer, mice, caribou and muskrats all forage on the plants at various stages of their growth cycle.

Fireweed is a beautiful, pollinator-friendly addition to home gardens. Its impressive height serves as a focal point in native plant displays, especially when paired with companions such as little bluestem, hairy penstemon or white sagebrush. The plant is so prolific that deadheading may be necessary to control its spread. However, larger, more dominant plants will eventually overshadow fireweed, particularly in open areas.

To grow your own fireweed, sow the seeds in late fall or early spring after cold stratification in low-nutrient, well-drained soil. You can also take cuttings from live plants in early spring.

groats, flour, flakes, raw oats and residuals like oat hulls.

"The structure is up, and equipment is being installed," says Larsen. "The time frame is to be operating in August."

According to CEO and majority owner Landon Plagge, Green Acres had already secured most of its needed supply by September of last year. Unlike other oat product suppliers, Green Acres will process only oats, eliminating concerns about cross-product contamination.

Oat Mafia oats will meet the strict premium requirements Green Acres has set. In addition to being regeneratively grown, growers pledge not to use glyphosate as a desiccant. The crop is tested for the chemical during vegetative growth and at harvest.

Oats processed at the plant will be identity-preserved. Buyers, and potentially end users or consumers, will be able to trace products back to the farms that grew the oats.

Building demand for their oats remains a challenge. However, the Oat Mafia has received a lot of regional and national media attention. Increasing interest in regenerative agriculture and the fact that oats align with that approach, helps bolster their efforts. Additionally, the idea of a grassroots group of producers exploring new markets adds to the momentum. The new processing plant could be key to turning that attention into actual sales.

"Every time we get a national news story, it attracts potential buyers like bakers in New York," says Larsen. "They may be attracted to our lack of glyphosate or our emphasis on domestic production. We talk about how oats benefit water quality and soil health. The story is more than just oats."

Larsen highlights the importance of differentiating the oats they produce from commercial production, which is mostly in Canada. If successful in marketing what the group produces, Larsen expects rapid growth.

"There are a lot more farmers waiting for a market," says Larsen.

He notes a side benefit for those who have joined the group.

"There are a number of members who are always trying something new for their farm, whether winter camelina, sunflowers or other crops," says Larsen. "Other concepts are also being tried, such as soybeans planted behind oats or buckwheat and the benefit of pollinators. With the network, there's always information being shared."

To learn more, join The Oat Mafia Facebook group.

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