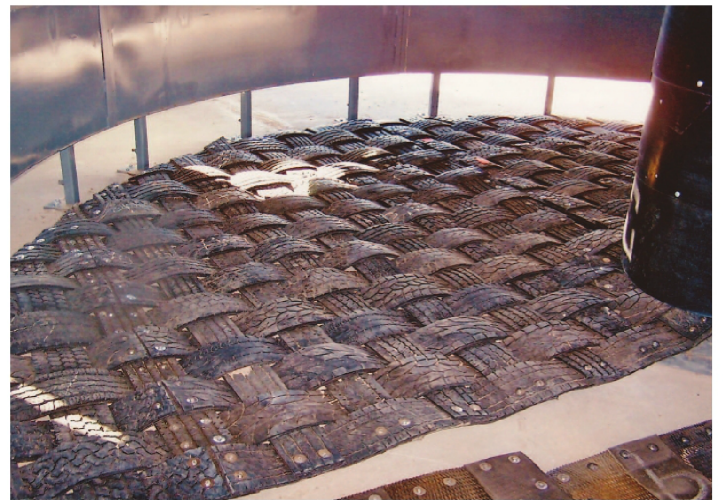


Non-Slip Flooring Becoming Standard for Cattlemen

By Micky Burch | *Nebraska Cattleman* Feature Writer

For years, Neil Koster, president of Mid-Plains Equipment, Inc., Kearney, Neb., only handled steel trailers. “Over the years, I had customers ask me when I was going to handle an aluminum stock trailer,” he states. “My response was when I found one that would stand up to Nebraska cattlemen and roads.” In 2006, he found what he was looking for and has been handling the aluminum trailer ever since.

Even with the best-built aluminum trailer, though, Koster says 90 percent of owners comment about the noise, which can cause cattle to be hard to load. “About five years ago, I had a customer wanting a new stock trailer equipped with WERM [We Eliminate Rubber Mats] rubber flooring,” Koster explains. They were able to have the flooring installed in the trailer at a facility in Oklahoma.



The Double D Cattle Mat is made out of center-tire treads that are woven together and fastened with stainless steel bolts, washers and nuts.



WERM flooring can be applied in new or used aluminum stock trailers to help reduce noise and livestock slipping.

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“After that, we had other interest in the flooring, so in 2011 we obtained a franchise.” Since then, Mid-Plains has installed WERM flooring in more than 240 trailers. Today, 95 percent of their new aluminum trailer sales have WERM flooring. The flooring comes to Mid-Plains in a bag as a ground-up rubber mixture, along with tanks of liquid material. “We weigh it out and blend it in a big mixer,” Koster explains. “Each batch covers 15 square feet.” They first apply a primer to a clean, dry aluminum floor, then spread the rubber mixture over the floor and trowel until it’s 1/2 to 5/8 of an inch thick. To top it off, they use a sealer. It takes 2.5 hours for the rubber to set up, and livestock can be hauled on it after 48 hours.

The comments from customers about the rubber flooring have been overwhelmingly positive, Koster reports. First of all, it solves the problem of excess noise when loading cattle, and even makes a notable difference in the amount of noise when hauling empty. Customers also report less slipping, reduced foot scrapes and less stiffness in animals after long hauls. Trailer maintenance is also easier; because urine and liquids don’t seep through the rubber flooring, it’s easy to clean out the trailer with a 30” squeegee or by simply power-washing it.

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Because Mid-Plains is a franchise for WERM flooring, the firm can easily install the flooring in older stock trailers. "We've had several customers bring in their used aluminum stock trailers to have the flooring installed," Koster adds. He also says WERM flooring has recently been applied to concrete floors and alleyways in cattle working facilities, providing the same non-slip environment.

Additional Applications

In 1995, Dale and Dena Goetz started making doormats out of used tire sidewalls, discarding the tire treads. Soon after, a cattleman from St. Francis, Kan., who had a feedlot with concrete that was slick for cattle to walk on, asked if Dale could come up with something for cattle using the discarded tire treads. Dale and Dena have a feedlot of their own, and were also in need of a similar product to provide stability and comfort for cattle in the processing area. The next year, they distributed their first cattle mats and their customers reported 60 to 70 percent fewer falls of cattle in their lots,

proving the mats provided excellent traction. Dale and Dena watched 1,000 head go through their own facilities, and not one fell down.

Research from Temple Grandin, Ph.D., professor at Colorado State University, indicates that animals tend to panic if they slip even a little bit, result-

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NON-SLIP FLOORING

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ing in further agitation while in the chute. "Our mats reduce slipping and absorb chute side noise, which calms down the animals and provides a safer working area," Christin Merwald of Double D Family Mat Shop, Inc., Park, Kan., says.

Today, Double D offers four different mats. The Double D Cattle Mat is made out of center-tire treads that are woven together and fastened with stainless steel bolts, washers and nuts. Baler Belt Mats are woven and fastened together the same way, but are a lighter alternative to the Cattle Mats.

"Baler Belt Mats are easier to move and cost a little less," Christin says. "Most are used in scale areas and trailers where steel-reinforced tire treads aren't necessary." The third, the Carriage Bolt Mat, is made from baler belts that are woven and bolted together with small carriage bolts to protect the hooves of smaller livestock like hogs and sheep. The fourth product is a Solid Rubber Mat made with a ribbed surface for firm traction.

"These mats are for human use beside chutes or any area where a floor may be slippery," Merwald explains. "They do wonders to relieve fatigue from standing on concrete or hard surfaces." Double D keeps standard size mats on hand at all times, and can also custom build mats to any dimensions at no extra cost.

Porous Solutions

After more than 30 years in the trailer and repair business, it's safe to say the folks at Ken's Trailer Sales, Norfolk, Neb., know their stuff – especially when it comes to trailer flooring. About six months ago, they added to their business by offering Polyplast rubber flooring in all the aluminum and steel trailers they sell. They also install the special flooring in used/pre-owned trailers. "A lot of cattlemen comment on the noise and cattle slipping, especially on aluminum trailer floors," Bud Palmer, salesman for Ken's Trailer Sales, says. "We decided to start installing Polyplast flooring based on their good reputation, and our customers really like it."

Like other rubber flooring, Polyplast comes as a ground up rubber, and is mixed with a binder. The solution is then spread about 3/4 in. thick on the trailer floor with a primer, then finished with a top coat. Polyplast comes in porous and non-porous textures.

"The difference between the two is the porous texture allows all of the moisture to seep through the floor," Palmer explains. The advantage of that, he says, is the trailer doesn't get as sloppy and wet, which allows for continued cushion for the livestock. That, in turn, results in less slipping and fewer injuries during loading and unloading. Those benefits, combined with noise reduction, are why Palmer more often recommends owners install the porous flooring in their trailers.

Whether it's for trailer floors, cattle working areas or chute-side use for humans, non-slip flooring is becoming a staple for cattlemen across the country. 

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