

# Tired tires find new life at Ashern recycler



Peter Schroedter of OTR Recycling stands in front of his company's sign made from used tires. The company creates a variety of products from the scrap.

# Cattle troughs, garden mulch ease burden on landfills

**A**SHERN — Their first lives are as 14,300-kilogram rubber tires on quarry mine trucks you practically need an extension ladder to climb into.

Their second lives are more laid back. They are put out to pasture as cattle troughs.

Peter Schroedter's niche business near Ashern keeps huge industrial tires out of landfills.

It's a riff on car tire recycling but OTR (Off the Road) Recycling only picks up the big boys — off-road industrial tires. He gathers up 80 per cent of used industrial tires in Manitoba, collecting from as far away as Churchill and mining towns like Lynn Lake.

Mining tires are the largest, reaching up to 17,600 kg each. Tractor tires weigh from 440 to 660 kg, and the tires on front end loaders start at over 1,100 kg.

Then OTR "repurposes" them in its facility, 170 kilometres north of Winnipeg off Highway 6, into products such as troughs, snow-plow blades, loading-dock bumpers, garden mulch and road fill for frost boils.

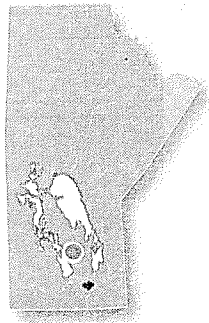
"The water troughs we build are virtually bulletproof. Even if a bullet went through, these are virtually self-sealing," said Schroedter, 57.

This is a second life for Schroedter, too. He's a former rancher who sold his sheep in March of 2003, just two months before the BSE (mad cow) crisis devastated the livestock industry.

"For five years, I felt guilty not being in the business anymore. My image of myself was always as a rancher. But now I can finally drive down the road and I don't count bales anymore," he said. That's as in counting hay bales to check how many bales per acre everyone is getting.



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Schroedter started the recycling business a dozen years ago but has run it full time the past two years. Business today approaches \$1 million per year, and Schroedter has five full-time employees and three part-time.

"Before, it took two incomes just to support the farm," he said.

Now he collects 1,500 tonnes of rubber tires per year. A truck with an 17,600-kg boom picks up the tires and can haul up to 150 tractor tires per load.

"I get paid to take them. I'm like BFI for rubber," said Schroedter.

That is, Schroedter is paid by Tire Stewardship Manitoba (TSM), a not-for-profit organization that manages the scrap-tire recycling on behalf of Manitoba tire retailers. In southern Manitoba, he can get up to \$350 per tonne of rubber tire collected. That's for pickup and processing.

The problem with tires is the rubber doesn't break down. "If the tire is exposed to the sun, the first inch of rubber would deteriorate in 500 years, according to the (U.S.) EPA (Environmental Protection Agency)," said Schroedter.

Tires used to pile up in landfills and collect water in their rims, which creates horrific breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

If there's a fire, a pile of tires can burn for months. When buried, the tires will eventually float and destroy liners of the landfill, said Brett Eckstein, executive director of Tire Stewardship Manitoba.

On average, Canadians produce about one tire per person per year, including passenger vehicle and industrial tires. Manitoba produces about 1.4 million tires per year, which are being put to use by OTR and Reliable Tire Recycling on Dublin Avenue in Winnipeg, Eckstein said.

Schroedter worked with Vidir Machine Inc., north of Arborg, to develop a machine that cuts tires width-wise. Tires regularly come in at five to six inches thick, and can be up to a foot thick.

It's tough material. "A hockey puck is about 95 hardness. Most of our rubber is in the high 70s from mining tires, and our softest is 60. Car tires are 58," said Schroedter.

The troughs are stacked and sunk into the ground until they hit warmer temperatures, which keeps the water from freezing in winter.

More information is available at [www.otr-recycling.com](http://www.otr-recycling.com).

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