

Tractors and Arena work

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Arena Engineer

JD 4230, Parma Arena Groomer, Scarifier are main equipment.

I can haul to your arena or use your equipment.

Fees negotiable, limited availability

Experience: 15 years working ground at arenas in Washington, Oregon, California, Nevada.

Ground work at 4H state finals, BTM races, BRN4D finals, BRN4D races, PBHA, NBHA, EBRA, WSH, WBRA, selected Futurities.

The below comments are my opinions and observations only. Use at your own risk. I have owned or used many tractors for arena work. I'll give a short talk on this page.

EQUIPMENT

My equipment of choice is a 6' Parma Arena Groomer (available through BRN4D at a discount), and a 6 shank scarifier.

The scarifier allows deep ripping and busting of any hard-pan in the arena.

The Parma is a working tool that can achieve a depth of 3" to 4" and is best used as a "top-dresser".

I have yet to find a single tool that will do BOTH the above functions well as these two individual tools. They are also easily transported.

I prefer this type of equipment because maneuverability and weight are primary considerations in an arena. Heavy equipment packs ground!

Other equipment I may use are the 8' Parma or an 8' "wheel" depending on soil conditions.

Tractor requirements for this type of equipment are 30 to 50 HP, 4 wheel drive is very handy. I prefer industrial tread or turf tires; farm tires can leave compaction ridges.

NOTE: tractor tire footprints MUST be covered by the grooming equipment!

A 6' Parma requires the tractor tires be no more than 6' at the widest!

My tractor of choice is a John Deere 4320 Large Compact. This particular tractor was sponsored at the 2006 BRN4D Pasco finals By RDO Equipment. It was such a superior tractor I just had to own it! RDO Equipment had the best prices also! They will be a major tractor sponsor at this years Pasco BRN4D finals, check out their equipment!

JD 4320 specs:

48hp

Fully synchronized transmission, 12 speeds forward and reverse.

Direction reverser on dash.

Very nimble and maneuverable.

Quick start engine and quick detach loader.

This tractor is worth 10 to 15 riders more per hour than the Case 430 I now use as a backup.

Occasionally you will see me use a JD 420U or 430U, these antiques are still able to do the job! Enjoy!

NOTE: Kabota has sponsored tractors at many BTM races. The equivalent Kubota tractors to my JD 4230 are very good, quality, dependable units. I'm a JD man, if I didn't have my JD I would go Kubota.

GROUND WORK

As a close friend of mine says: "Good ground is no secret, bust it up, put it back, use water as necessary". Truer words never spoken!

We bust most ground deep; we use the Parmas and other equipment to put the ground back.

Packing: At high-level races we may pack the ground or run it a bit wetter. Typical horses at these races can handle the faster conditions. At entry or lower-level races we might not pack and may reduce the water content. This will result is safer ground that benefits inexperienced horses and riders.

Water: Use as required, it takes experience to know how much to apply to a particular arena. Indoors, outdoors, weather conditions, humidity, wind, how long it takes for the ground to absorb the water; it all has to be taken into account.

Water should be worked into the soil so moisture content is consistent throughout. You MAY want to put more water at the barrels and other places where the ground is worked hard.

Every time a horse runs or grooming equipment is used the soil is exposed to the air and loses moisture. Don't be afraid to put back what you loose!

Working the arena:

SAFETY FIRST! IT IS EVERYONES JOB!

Pay attention to the entries to the barrels. Each run throws dirt out. Use a raking pattern that puts the dirt back. Vary the pattern, if you don't you may develop packed ridges from the tractor tires. Remember, every pass with the tractor will pack the ground a little and remove more moisture. Make your raking pattern as efficient as you can. Try to predict what the ground will do, try to correct problems before someone gets hurt. Continually check the arena for levelness and vary the raking pattern if you see problems developing. Watch the entry, if it gets slick or deep horses may have problems at the end of the run.

Every rider has an opinion about ground, when things are going bad almost every one of them will try to advise the tractor driver. Some riders are very knowledgeable, some don't know squat but think they do. It helps to have a single person in over-all charge of the ground. Unless you have a very experienced tractor driver, I advise you have a policy that all ground issues be taken up with the appointed person who can then decide what to pass on to the tractor driver.

Don't be afraid of fixing a problem or of hard-work. Personally, it hurts me to see someone get in trouble on my ground. The absolute worst is if I think I could have done a better job and prevented the wreck. If I think the ground is un-safe, I will stop the show and try to fix it the best I can. This will drive some rider's nuts, but in my opinion is the only way to go. Remember; safety should not be sacrificed for number of riders per hour!

I am always willing to talk ground. If you have questions just ask and you'll get my opinion!