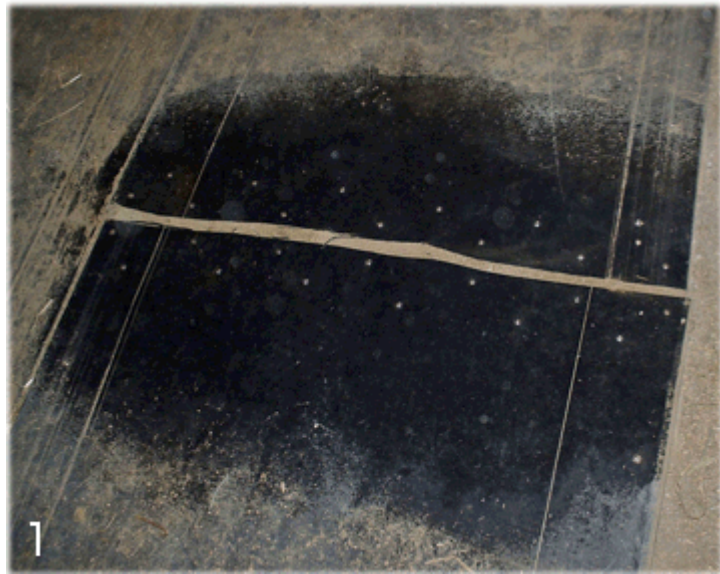


Mending Mats

This “invention” is easy. Two strips of conveyor belting mats (side-by-side) form the gray barn main aisle ninety-foot runner. But each of these runner lengths are of two forty-five foot pieces, spliced as illustrated here (illus. 1). I



trimmed the mats pretty squarely to each other with a utility knife (bend-open the cut with each knife-stroke), set a twelve-inch wide piece of forty-two inch long, three-quarter-inch plywood under the matting ends, drilled slightly generous pilot holes through the rubber matting, and drove the number ten sheet metal screws through the matting ends and into the plywood in a zigzag pattern (about six inches apart, on the seam), until the tops of the screw-heads were flush with the surface of the mats. I slipped six-inch wide pieces of half-inch plywood along each side of the plywood that holds the splice, to make the “height transition” less surprising. After two years the splice has not shifted at all, and it seems perfectly stable even after the occasional tractor-and-spreader down the aisle over it. And no one has tripped over it. It’s a success.

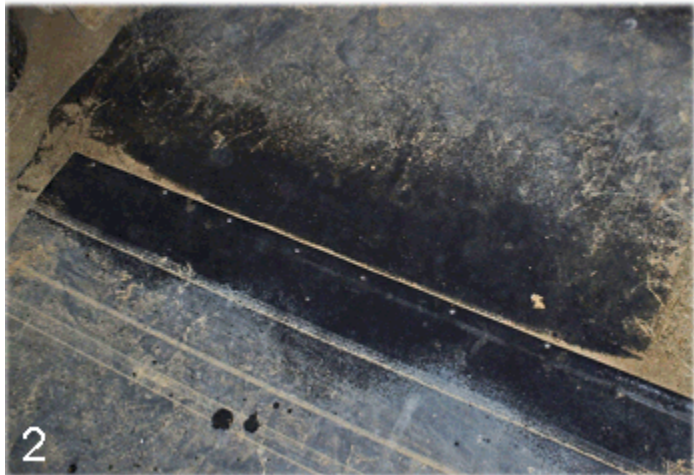
Get some sheet metal screws size number 10, pan head, Phillips drive, 1 1/2 inches long. Get a bunch. Get four, get six boxes. It’s a great size. The screw-heads will hold 1/4 inch washers (so they’re great for setting (and fixing) polyethylene feeders), they will “mend” rubber mats together, and there are fifty of number ten diameter for the

same price as twenty-five of the number twelve diameter. Get the number tens until the day there seems any inferiority in their performance versus something heavier.

For mending stall mats, consider that a strip of rubber matting/conveyor belt even twelve inches wide can also act as does this plywood mending-plate. Butt two mats together over a foot-wide strip of matting, drill pilots through the top layer, and send screws through the bottom strip until the screw-heads draw down flush with the tops of the upper mats. I've seen this work even with stall-front mats under (how do you say this in English?) "frantic feeders," the ones that plant their rears and hop their front legs left-and-right, back-and-forth, again-and-again, until the hay (and all over again, for the grain) drops into their stall. The fix is good.

Down-and-dirty: make stall-center mats overlap stall-edge mats, and screw down through the upper mats' margins (illus. 2 shows an aisle T-transition with this structure).

Generally, stall cleaning proceeds



from a central wet-spot, to gathering more solid waste nearer the edges of a stall, so this higher center "platform" doesn't snag fork-tines, doesn't make for frustrating stall cleaning, seems to work alright.

John Sepich.