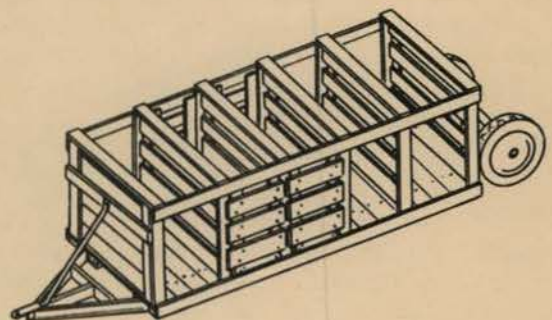
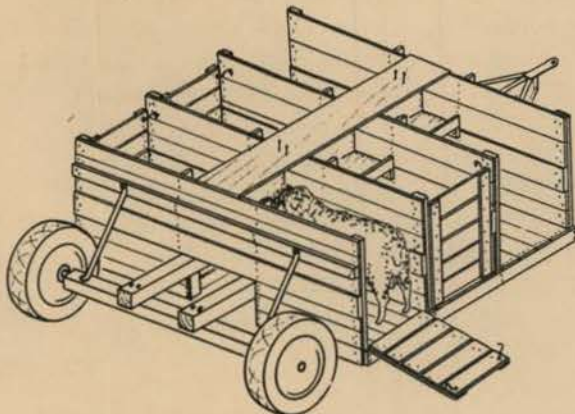
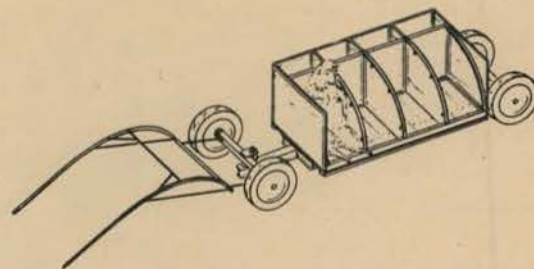
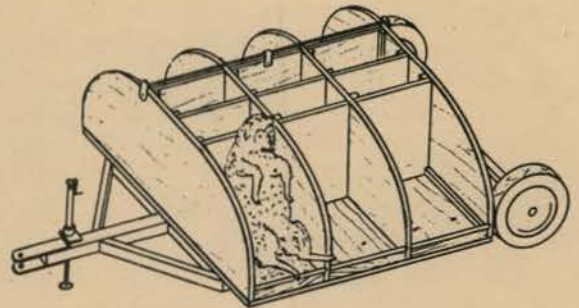
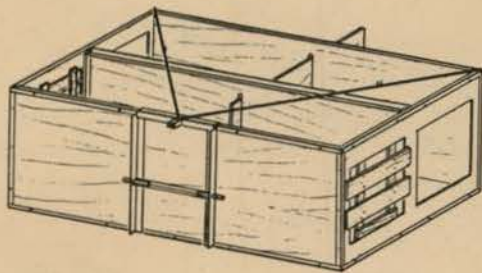


Granny Carts

*Used by Commercial Sheep
Producers in Idaho*

Stephen L. Peebles and Roy E. Taylor

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Granny Carts

Stephen L. Peebles and Roy E. Taylor*

Sheep operators tend to be traditional, to follow past experiences. Still, today's sheep producers are calling more and more on new knowledge — newer breeds and breeding techniques, better nutritional information, increased expertise in herd health — to help them cut costs, increase lambing percentage, reduce labor, save time and energy and, perhaps, increase profits.

Many Idaho sheep producers combine tradition, in the form of a traditional piece of equipment, with up-to-date health and nutrition practices to give them an extra management edge at the one time when they can affect profits the most. The equipment is a lamb retriever, commonly called a granny cart, and the critical time is lambing.

At no other time in the year can sheep operators affect profit as they can at lambing and the first 24 hours thereafter. Newborn lambs need protection from weather and a feeding of colostrum milk as quickly as possible after birth. With a granny cart, an old-fashioned rig in somewhat newer clothes, operators can quickly move the newborns and ewes, or expectant ewes, from the corral or drop area into the lambing barn and jugs.

With carts that hold 4 to 8 ewes and their lambs, the job is speeded up, and both labor and energy needs are reduced.

The reason for a granny cart is simple: Workers can more easily drive to the general area of a lambing ewe and get her into the cart than they can chase, drag, push or pull the ewe from a distant corner into the lambing shed. A ewe will follow a newborn lamb into most carts with minimum effort on the part of the "drop pickers." This means less activity and noise, so other ewes are more likely to remain calm, continue to feed or stay bedded.

Using a granny cart can also reduce the numbers of orphaned, grafted, starved, weakened or bumed lambs. When carts are used, the mother and new lamb are not likely to become separated. And the ewe has time to settle down and continue to have the second lamb, in case of twins. Most important, the lambs have better

opportunity to feed on colostrum milk in the first hours of life so their chances of survival are increased greatly.

Building a Granny Cart

Granny carts can be built in many different forms. The appendix pages of this publication show a number of the more common types of carts, together with construction suggestions provided by Idaho ranchers who use them and University of Idaho agricultural engineers.

Important considerations in cart construction are size, weight and convenience. Most carts have a capacity of 4 to 8 ewes with lambs, but the size should reflect the anticipated lambing rate of the flock. Carts that allow more than 1 ewe/lamb set per pen are not recommended.

Carts have been made from many materials including wood, poles, pipe, sheet metal and steel. The weight of the cart should be minimized as long as adequate structural strength can be economically achieved. Heavier carts not only require more power to move but are also more apt to bog down in soft, muddy areas.

Tires and wheels of various sizes are used, but at no time should the ewes have to step up more than 8½ inches; the lower the cart, the better. Some carts are only 4 to 6 inches off the ground and use skid plates to traverse rough lambing areas. The wheels should not extend beyond the width of the cart itself. This prevents wheels from catching on posts or on the corners of buildings, particularly when the cart is being turned.

Some operators prefer carts that can be loaded and unloaded entirely from one side. This feature often makes loading less time consuming and eliminates the need to turn the cart around to unload the ewes and lambs from the second side.

Some operators suggest that slatted gates are better than solid because sheep tend to load easier if an opening is visible. Many operators prefer lift-out type gates because hinges tend to sag, bend or shake loose. Removable gates can be used to help guide the ewes into the cart and also eliminate the need for having enough clearance for a hinged gate to open.

Since horses and horsemen are being used less in the sheep business, many carts are adapted to tractor pulls. Conventional tractors, garden tractors and 3- or 4-wheeled ATV's are used. Four-wheel carts can be

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equipped with tongues to accommodate either horses or tractors.

Sanitation

Sanitation is a major consideration in all phases of the lambing operation, including granny carts. When newborn lambs and ewes are picked up immediately, the chances of disease spreading in the drop area are minimized. But the spread of disease within the carts can be a problem unless operators follow good sanitation practices.

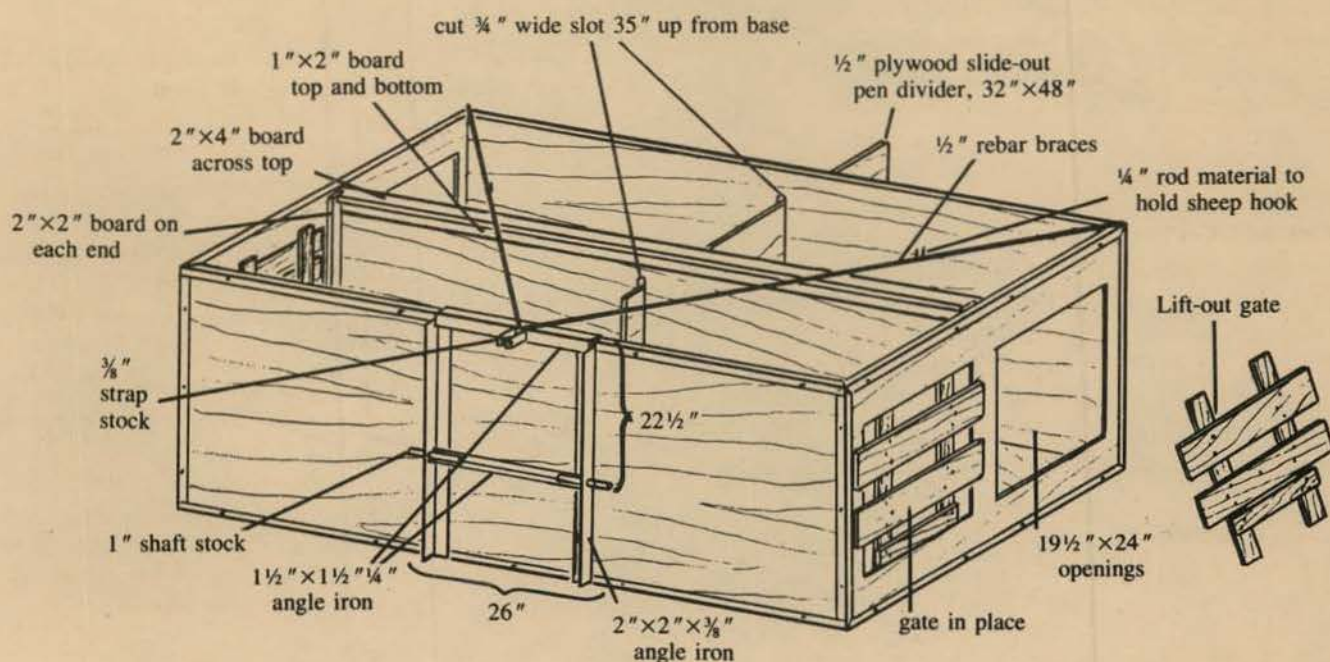
Carts can be bedded with straw, shavings, sawdust, carpet, styrofoam or any other material. Straw is by far the most common and easiest to clean and sanitize. Regular cleaning is essential and will pay good returns. Start each day with a clean cart, and disease and death loss will decrease considerably. Many operators regularly use lime in jugs so that would be an acceptable cleanser and disinfectant. Other disinfectants are available, and your preference will determine which cleanser or combinations of cleansers you use. Sanitation is particularly important for "sit up" type carts.

Appendix

Three-Point Hitch Granny Cart

Capacity: 4 ewes/lambs

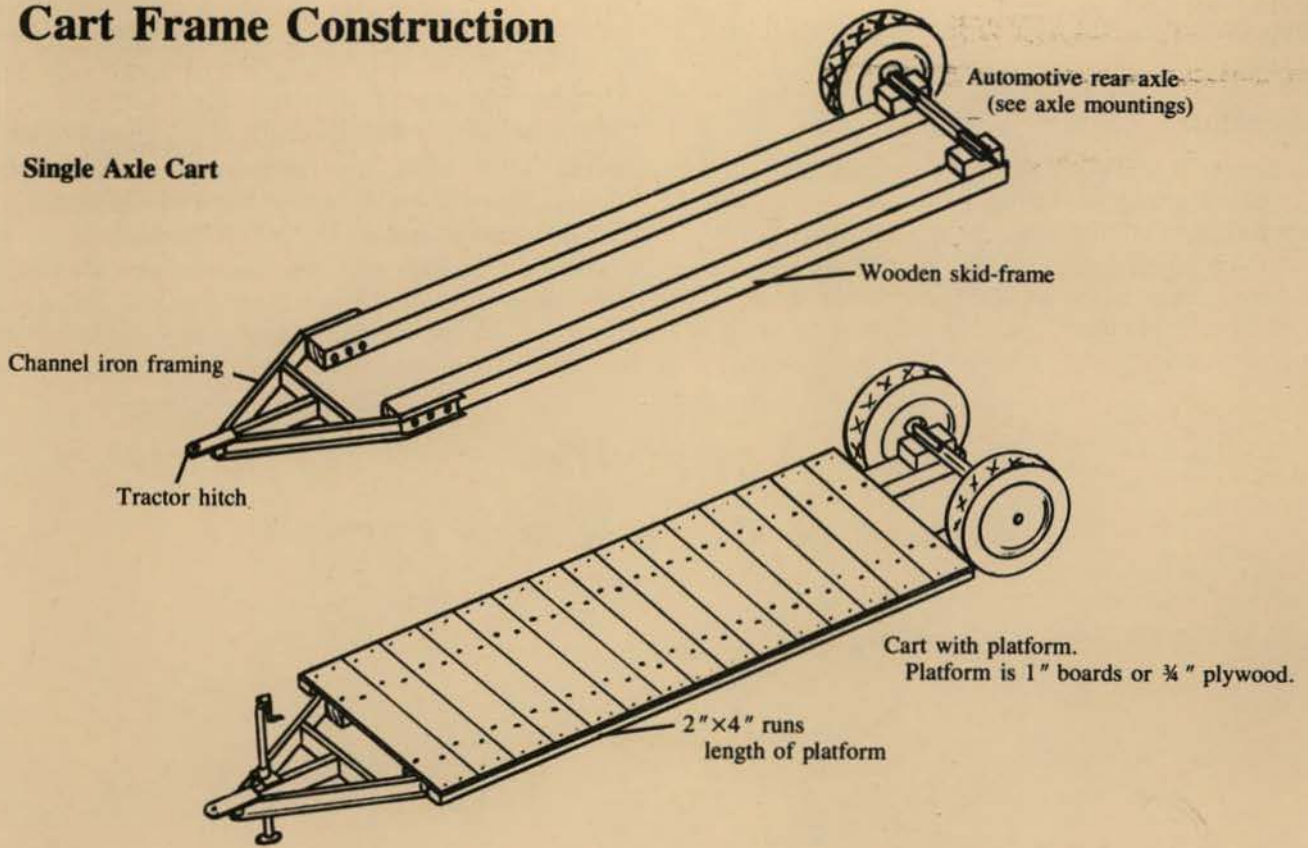
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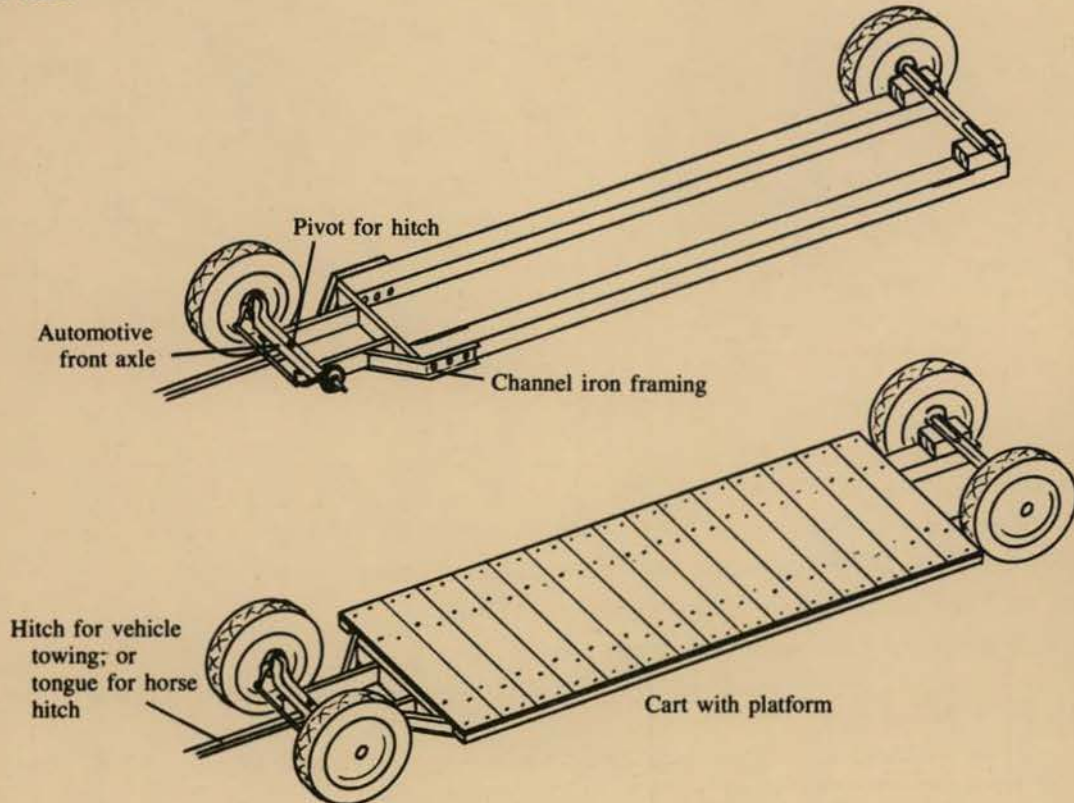
- Make steel framework of $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}'' \times \frac{1}{4}''$ angle iron.
- Size length \times width of base to fit a sheet of $4'' \times 8''$ exterior plywood.
- Drill several holes through the floor of each compartment to allow drainage.
- Size height of frame to accommodate $\frac{1}{2}''$ exterior plywood 38" high.
- Secure plywood to angle iron frame with $\frac{3}{16}''$ carriage bolts.
- Install $\frac{1}{2}''$ exterior plywood center divider. Secure with $2'' \times 2''$ frame on each end, a $2'' \times 4''$ across the top, and a $1'' \times 2''$ slat top and bottom.
- Construct 3-point hitch assembly using $2'' \times 2'' \times \frac{3}{8}''$ angle iron as vertical members. Reinforce across lift points with $1\frac{1}{2}'' \times 1\frac{1}{2}'' \times \frac{1}{4}''$ angle iron.
- Use 1" shafting for two lower hitch connections. Insert through vertical members and weld in place. Drill a hole through outer end on each side to accommodate a retaining washer and pin.
- Use $\frac{3}{8}''$ strap stock to make upper connection for hitch. Drill holes to accommodate connecting pin.

Cart Frame Construction

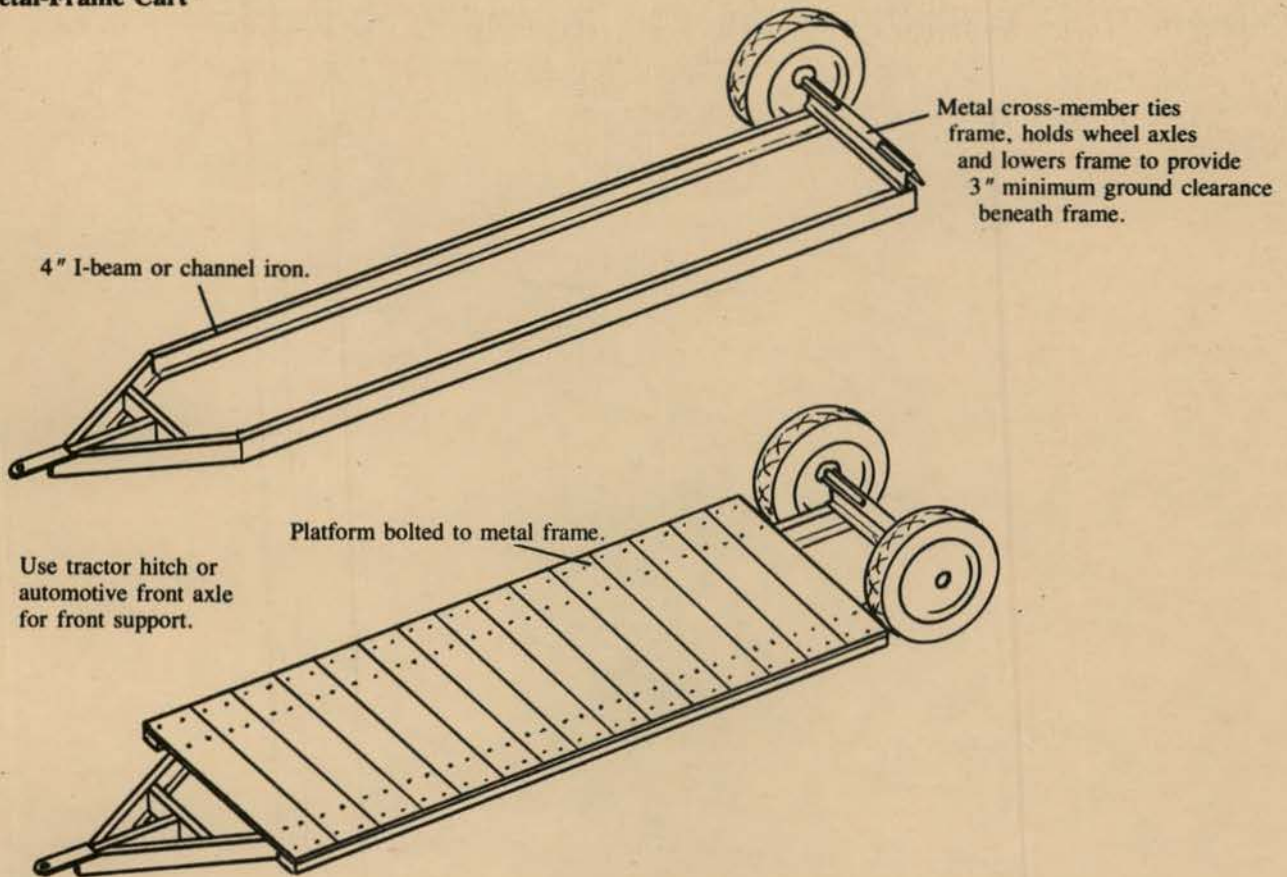
Single Axle Cart



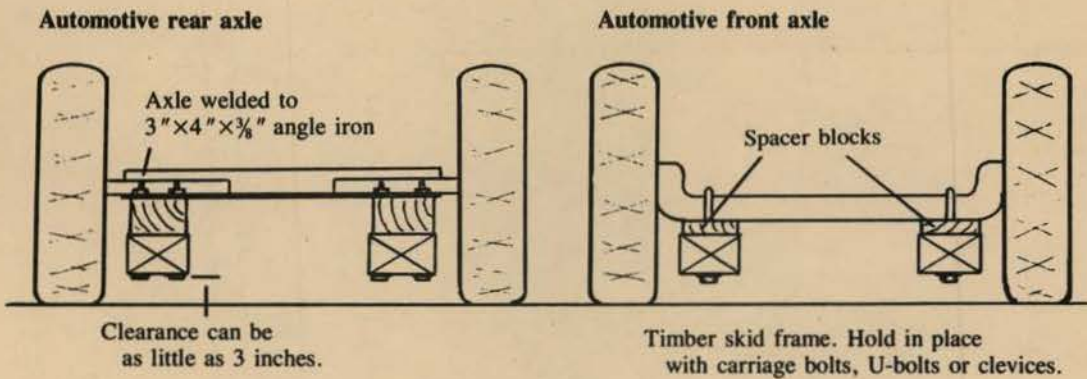
Two Axle Cart



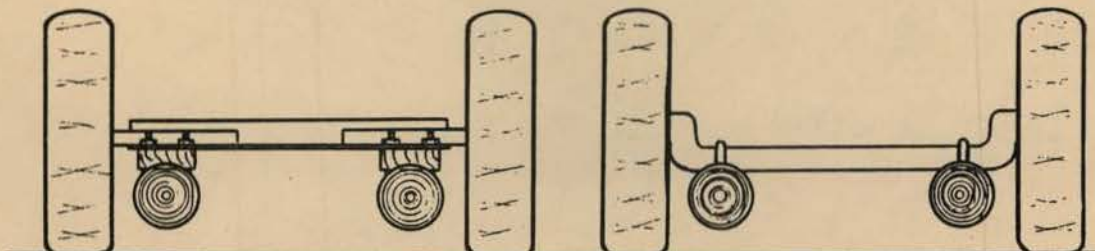
Metal-Frame Cart



Axle Mountings

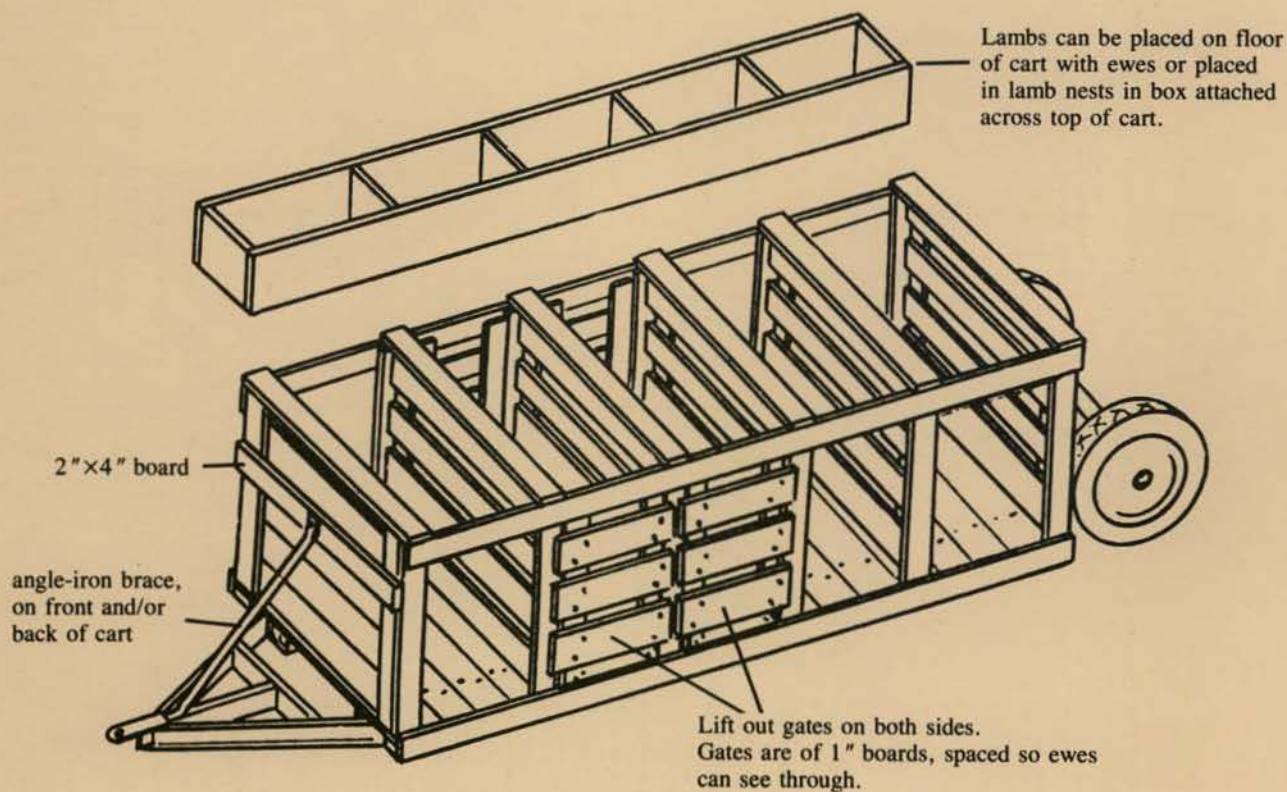
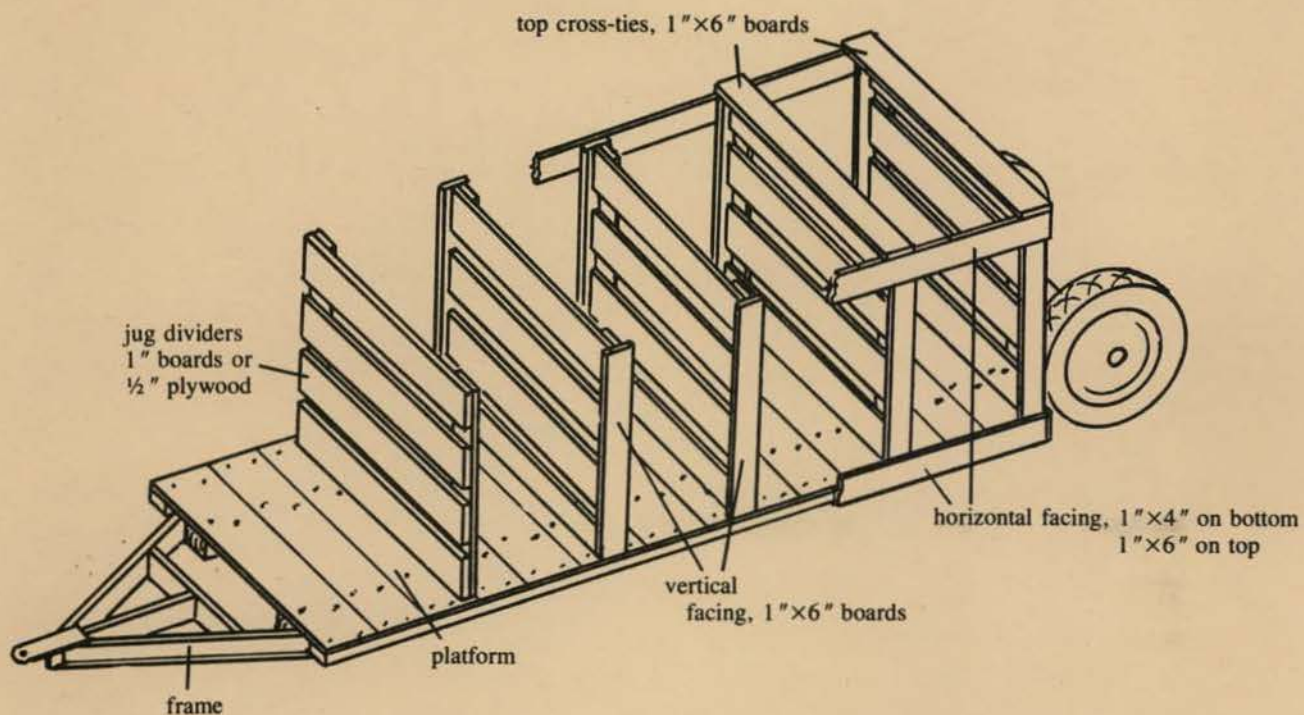


Pole Skid-Frames

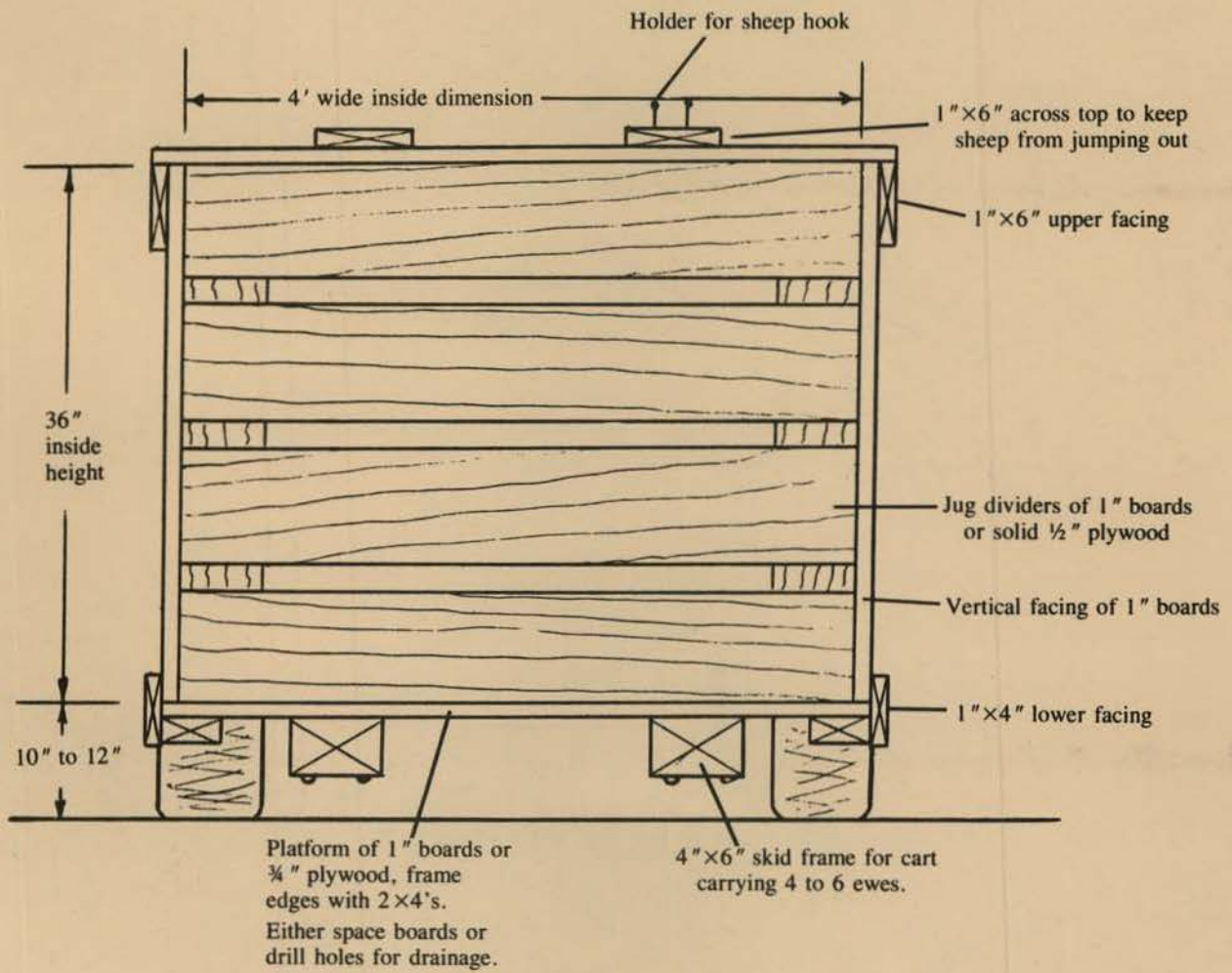


Single Row Walk-Through Granny Cart

- 4 to 6 stalls long.
- Stalls are 18" to 24" wide, depending on size of ewes.

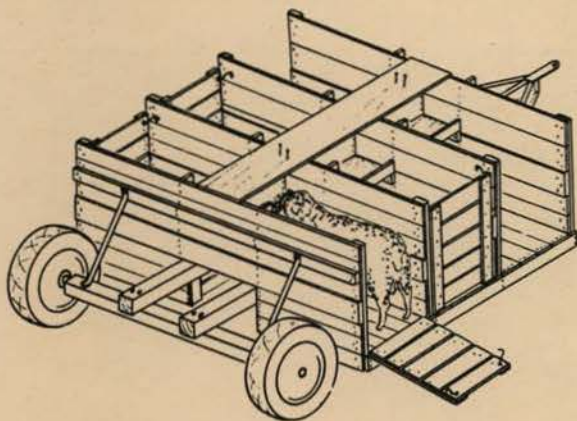


Cross Section of Single Row Cart

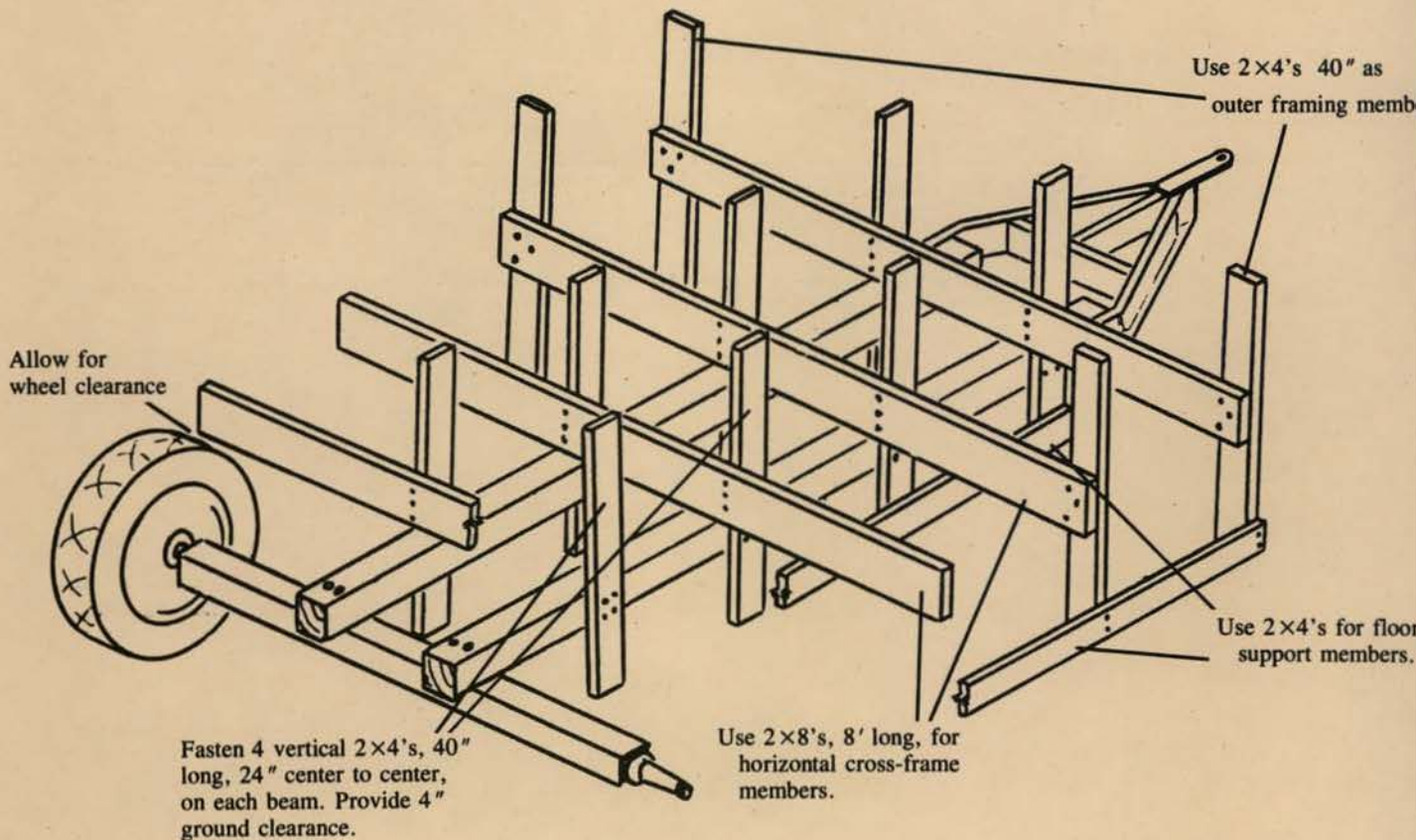
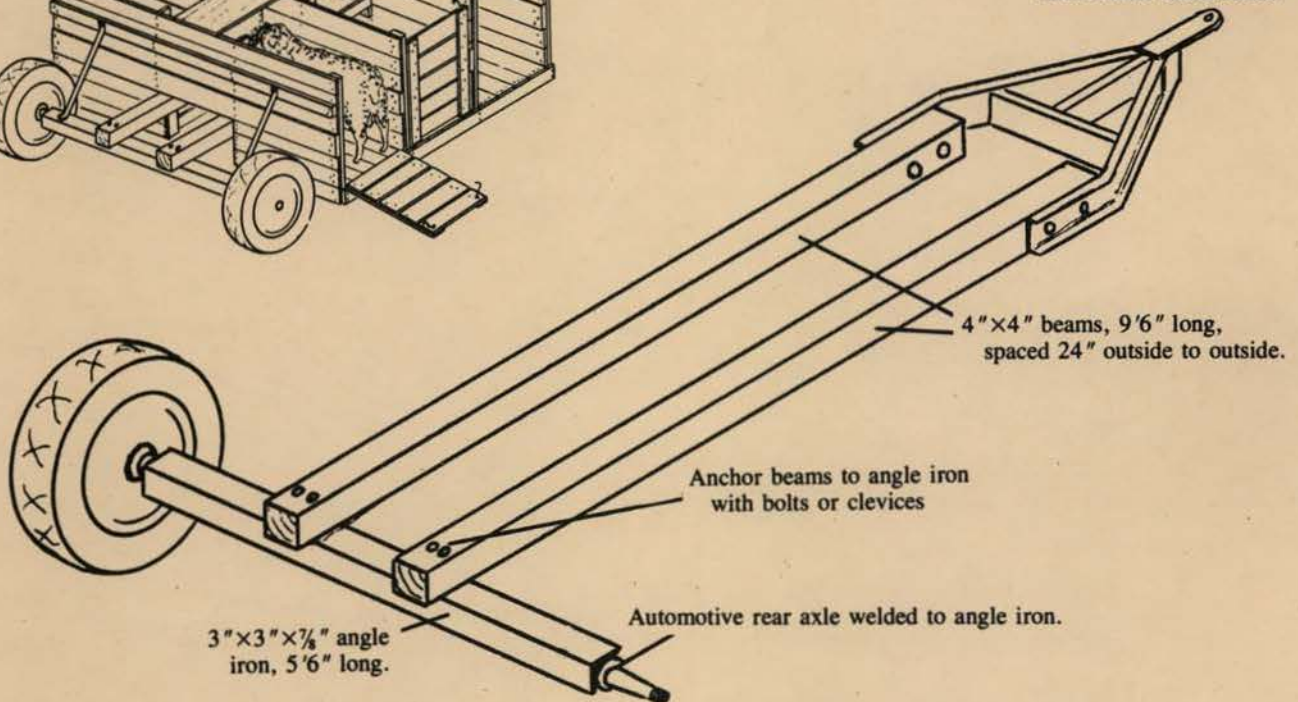


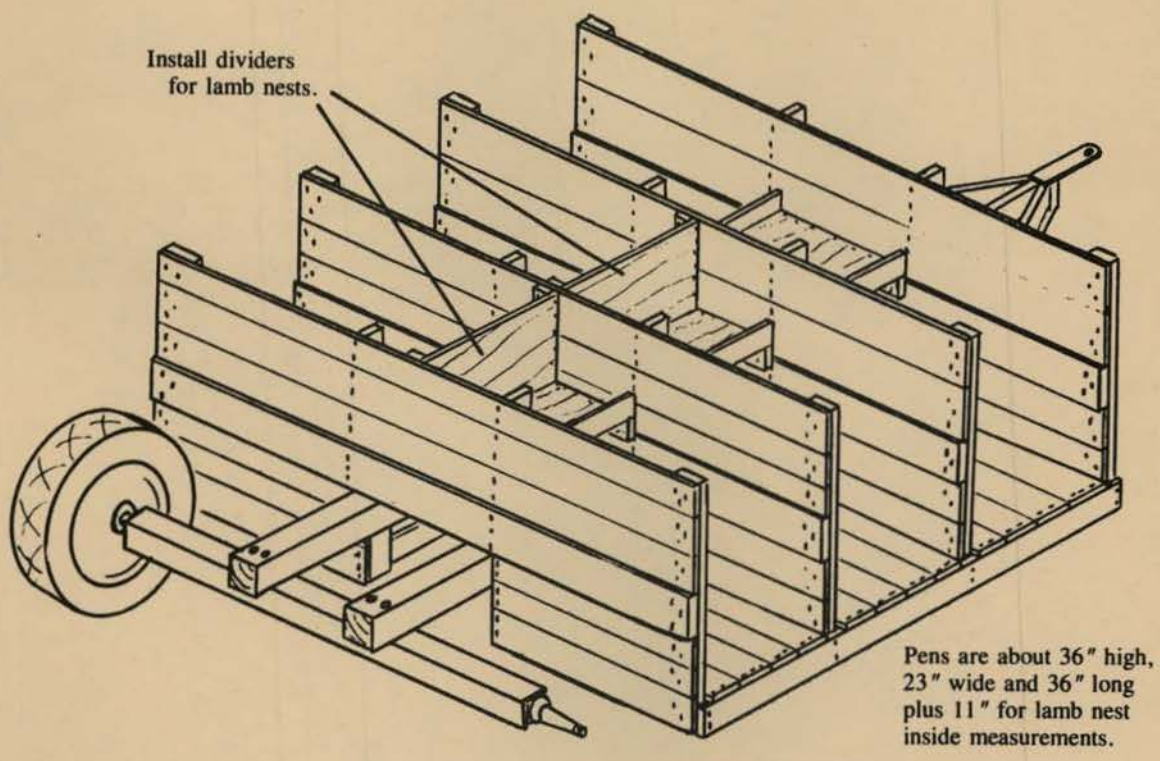
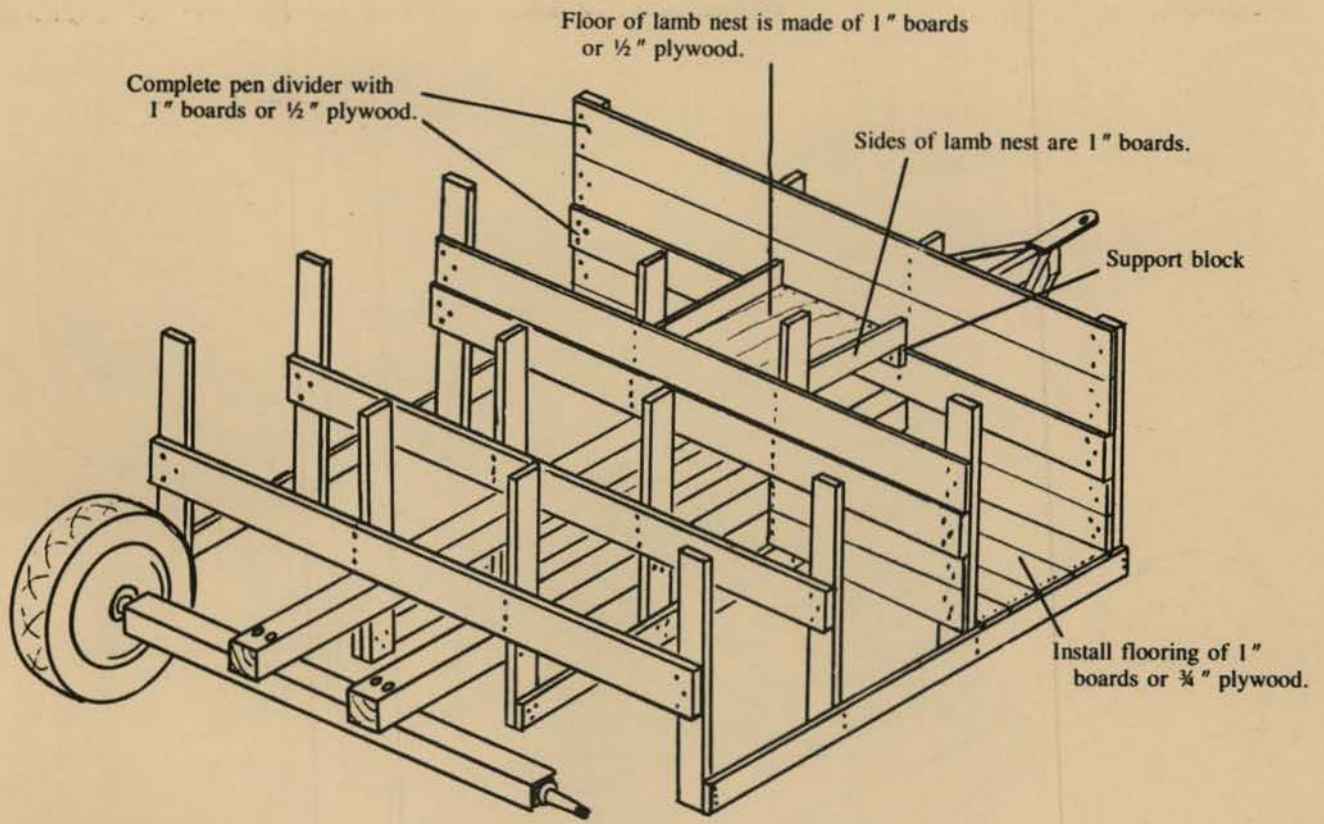
2-Row Granny Cart with Lamb Nests

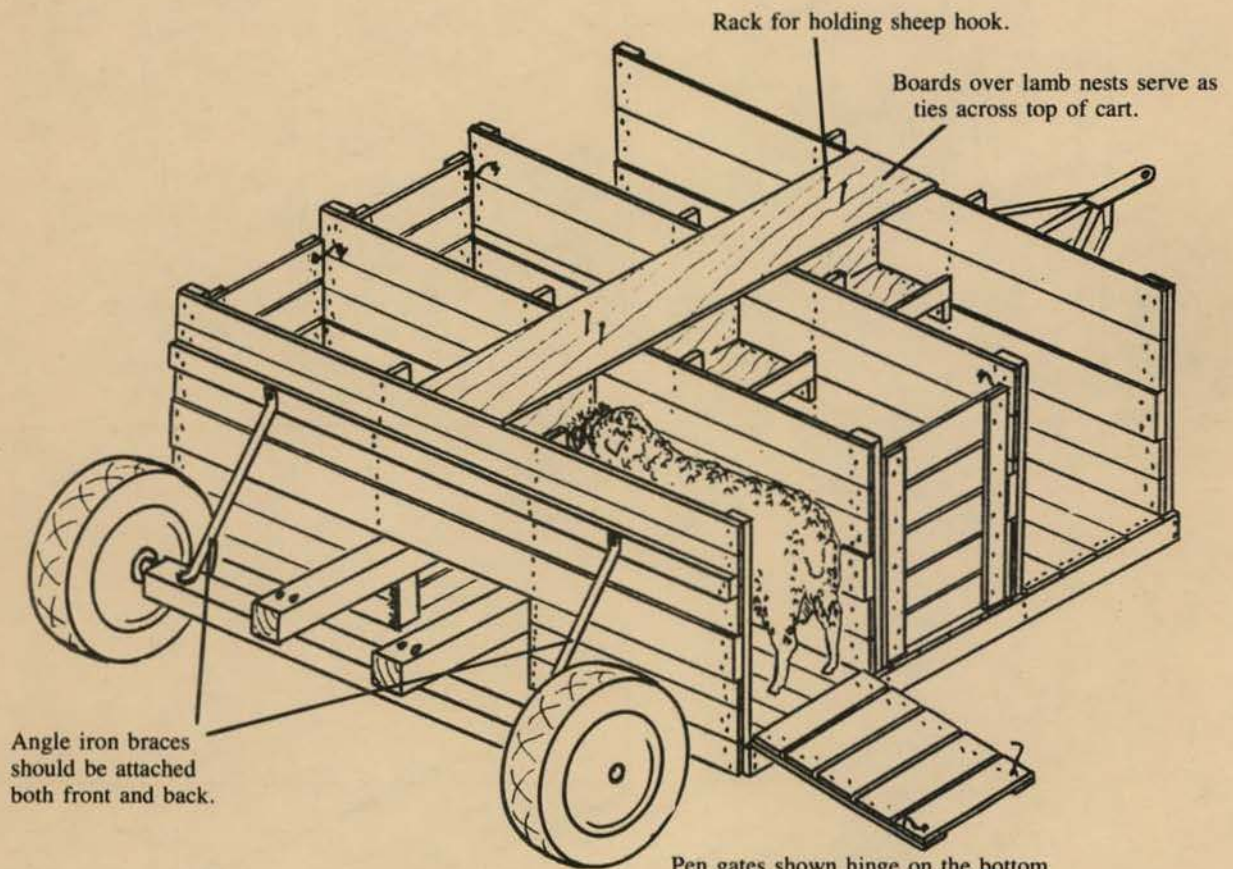
- Capacity: 6 ewes/lambs



For front support use either tractor hitch (shown) or automotive front axle. See Cart-Frame Construction







Angle iron braces should be attached both front and back.

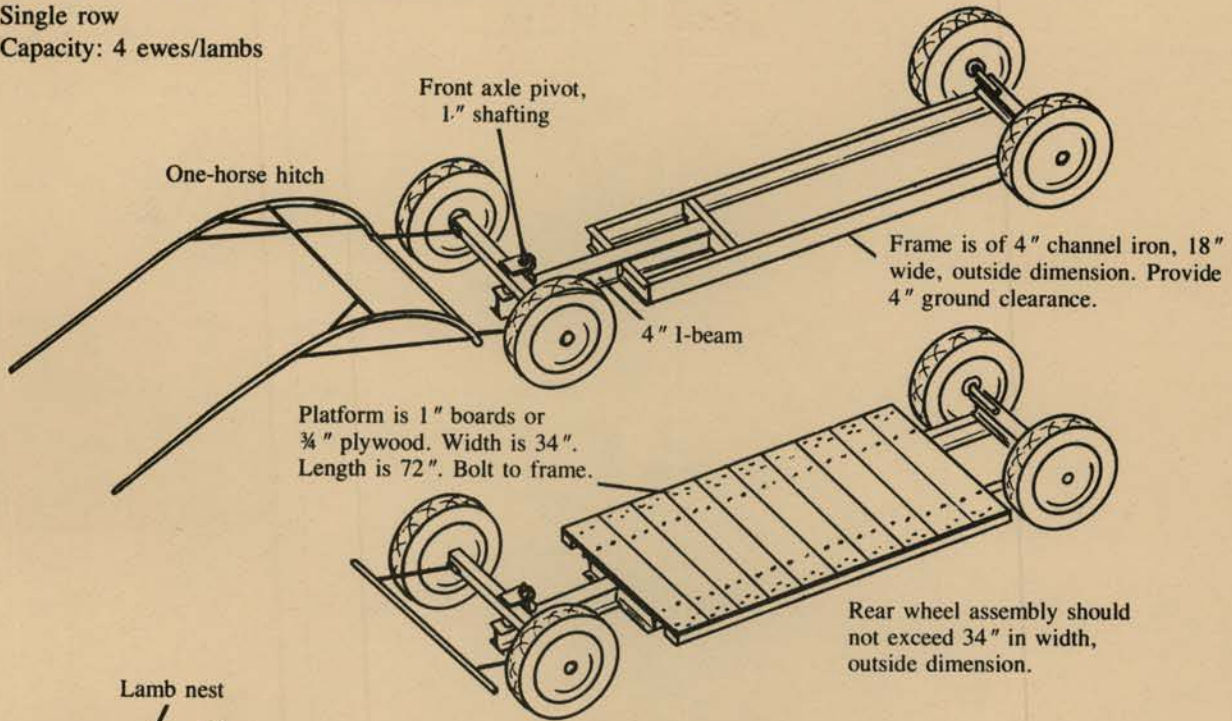
Note: Use bedding in lamb nests.

Pen gates shown hinge on the bottom and serve as ramps into cart. They can be held in place with hooks or pins.

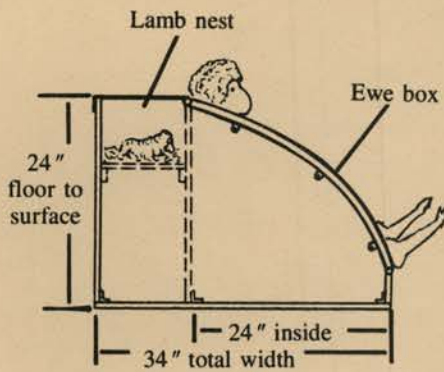
Lift-out drop-gates can be used that are held in place by vertical tracks along each side of pen opening.

Sit-Up Type Granny Cart with Lamb Nests

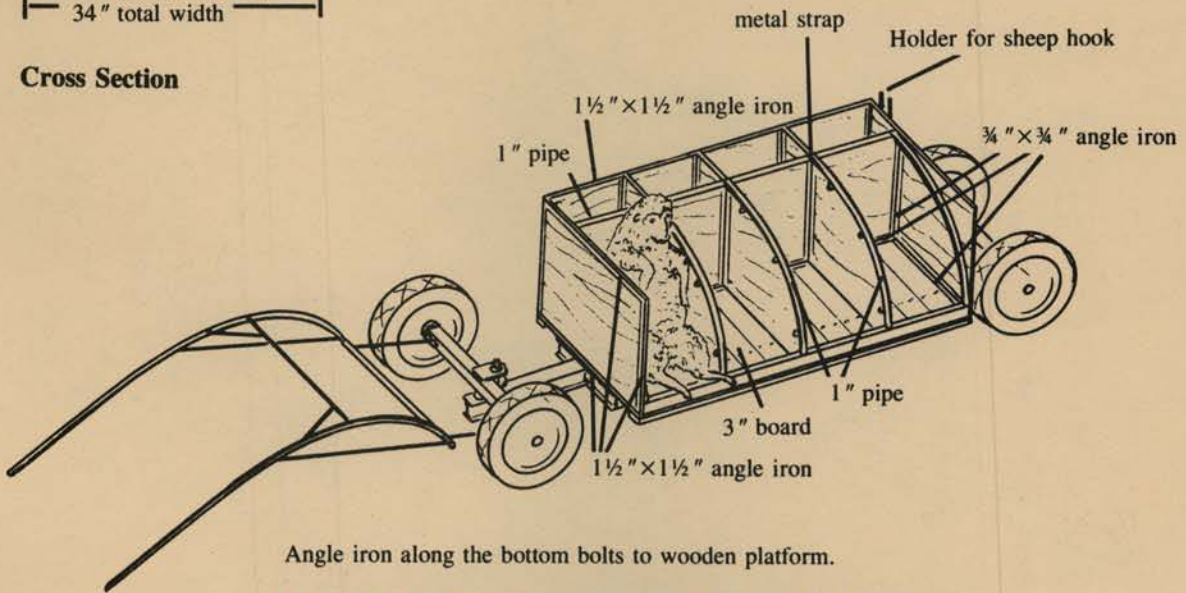
- Single row
- Capacity: 4 ewes/lambs



Rear wheel assembly should not exceed 34" in width, outside dimension.



Cross Section

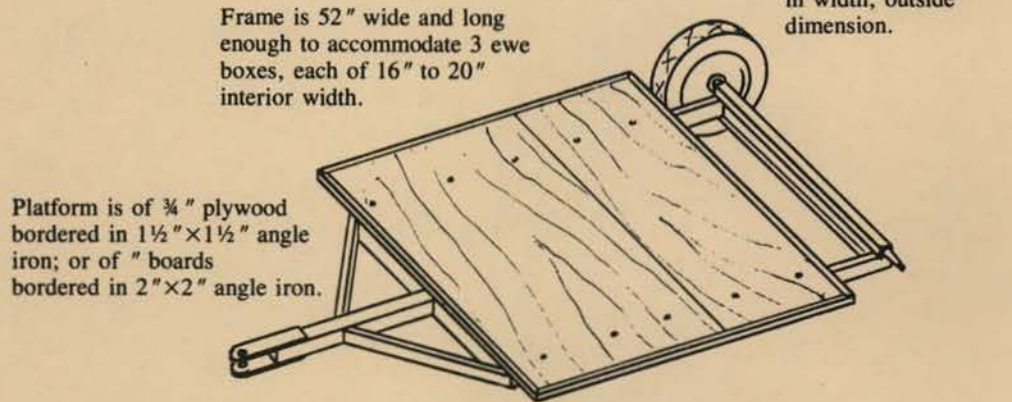
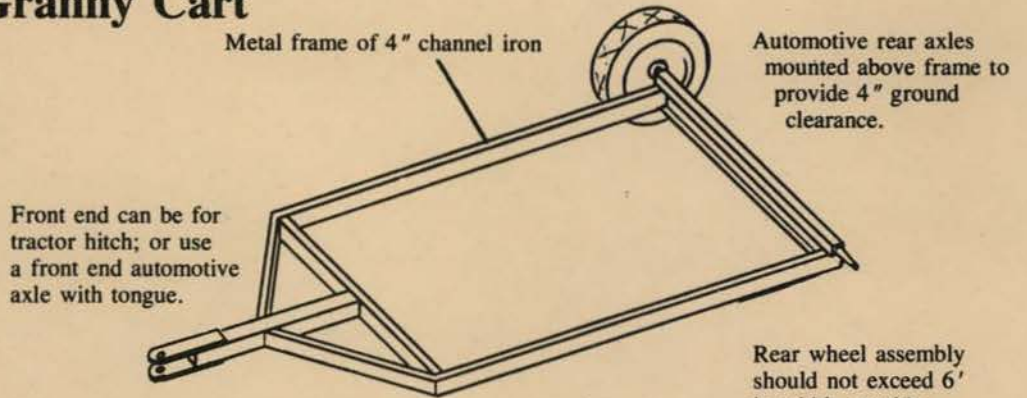


Angle iron along the bottom bolts to wooden platform.

Note: Drill holes through bottom of ewe boxes and lamb nests to provide drainage. Use bedding liberally with sit-up carts.

Sit-Up Type Granny Cart

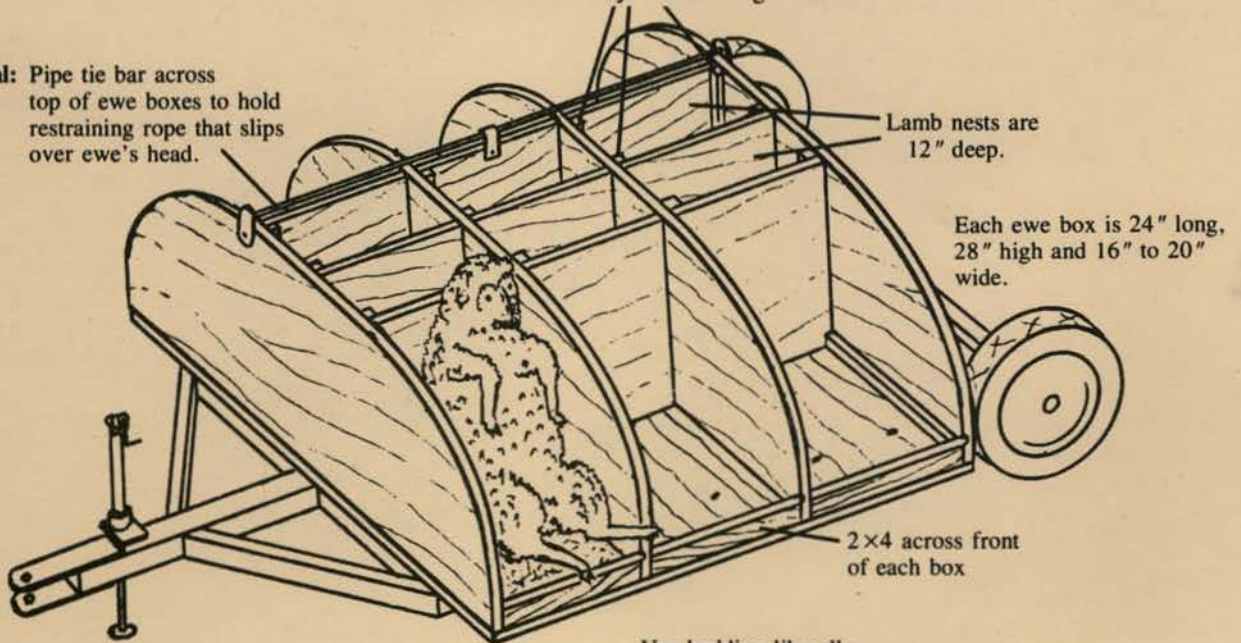
- Double-3
- Capacity: 6 ewes/lambs



Platform is 6' wide. Angle iron is welded to cart frame; plus wooden platform is bolted to frame.

Plywood can be joined by the use of 2x2's, by metal corner brackets or by 3/4" x 3/4" angle iron.

Optional: Pipe tie bar across top of ewe boxes to hold restraining rope that slips over ewe's head.



Use bedding liberally with sit-up carts.

Note: Drill holes through bottom of ewe boxes and lamb nests to provide drainage.

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