

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

terrible. The problem is that the center gearbox and blade spindle bearings don't last very long. I've spent more than \$2,000 during the last two years for repairs to the deck. I've tried to trade the tractor, but the dealer has such a bad reputation that nobody, including my New Holland dealer, wants it. Now I'm stuck with a worthless \$7,000 mower. The company admits the mower decks on this tractor are bad but won't do anything about it."

Erwin Ness, Middle River, Minn.: "I can't believe how much this rig can do," says Erwin, owner of a 1999 **Polaris Big Boss 6-wheeler**. "I use it every day to feed my cattle. My dealer has been great regarding warranty work."

Robert Rottinghaus, Jesup, Iowa: "My best buy is an electric fence controller made by **Fi-Shock Inc.**, Knoxville, Tenn. It produces a spark that will jump a full 1/2 inch from the wire. I use two wires, placed 5 and 10 inches off the ground, to stop raccoons from getting into my sweet corn. I bought the unit at a Menards store."

Bob Elgin, Indianola, Iowa: "My 2000 **Ford F-150 4-WD pickup** is my worst buy. It steers hard, which makes it difficult to stay on the road. I took the pickup back to the dealer at 12,000 miles to have the tires aligned. However, the warranty didn't cover alignment work so I had to spend \$44 of my own money. The dealer put 45 to 50 lbs. of air pressure in the tires, but it didn't help. One week later I took the pickup to another dealer and had to spend another \$44 for another alignment. This dealer let air out of the tires. It helped some, but it's still hard to keep the pickup on the road."

William Manchalenko, St. Pierre Julys, Manitoba: "I don't know how I ever got along without it," says William about his **Arctic Cat 500 ATV**. "I didn't have an ATV until recently and now it's the most valuable machine on my farm."



"For example, we use it to pull a side delivery wheel rake in the field. It's great because it's much softer on the field and does less damage to the alfalfa."

"We also use it with a pull-behind mower to cut ditches, which is a lot safer than using a tractor. We also pull a cart and wagons. It's got tremendous power for all kinds of jobs."

"I made a cart out of scrap material which I use to haul the ATV behind a pickup, and then I pull the cart with the ATV to do work."

"We've been doing so much around the farm with this machine that all my neighbors are watching me to see what we do next."

R.L. Dodd, Cashion, Okla.: "In **FARM SHOW's** Vol. 24, No. 4 issue, Daniel Stokes of Omro, Wis., reported that his 1999 **Deere Gator** was leaking gas into the oil. I'm having the same problem with my 2000 6 by 4 Gator. The spark plugs foul out and the engine backfires. The Deere dealer has worked on it several times without success so I bought a new carburetor. That didn't solve the problem and gas is still leaking into the oil. Does

anyone have an answer for this problem?"

"In **FARM SHOW's** Vol. 25, No. 6 issue, Larry Blockard of Hartman, Ark., said he was having trouble with fuel leaking from the fuel cap on his 1999 **Deere 5410 tractor**. My 2000 **Deere 5310 tractor** also leaks fuel out around the fuel cap. I discovered that the cap couldn't be screwed down far enough on the tank's plastic neck because the threads on it were faulty. I installed a new tank which solved the problem."

Randall Thomsen, St. Paul, Neb.: Randall's impressed with **Vitalix** protein tubs for cattle. "We tried using these tubs to see if the company's claims were valid or not. I was so impressed with them that I became a dealer. I used to sell two other nationally known brands of tubs, but Vitalix outperforms both of them. My cows look better and are cycling quicker after calving. They're available in different formulations."

"**Farnum** no-snag 1-piece tags are my worst buy. There's a 100 percent retention guarantee on these tags, yet we end up replacing between 10 and 20 percent of them every year. Replacing them is a frustrating and time consuming job."

Pete Lamp, Waterloo, Ind.: "My **Deines 1800 zero turn riding mower**, equipped with an 18 hp engine and a 5-ft. front-mounted deck, is my best buy. I've used it for two seasons without any problems. I really like the tilt-up deck feature for cleaning the deck after use. I have a lot of trees in my yard and a zero turn mower is really hard to use around them. This mower was priced 20 percent lower than any of the other zero turn mowers I checked out, and it's made in the U.S."

Leo W. Van Sant, Pella, Iowa: "I really like my **Deere 4040**. It performs well and is handy to use around our yard."

John H. Reed, Palestine, Texas: John's the satisfied owner of a 1999 **Kubota M6800** equipped with a **Woods** front-end loader. "It's a dependable tractor and has 445 hours on it with no problems. I use it for mowing and raking hay, mowing pastures, and for doing spraying and loader work. It handles big 5 by 6-ft. hay bales very well. We use a loader-mounted spear as well as 3-pt. hitch hay forks with it. The loader is equipped with a quick disconnect bucket and hay spear. The loader itself quick disconnects from the tractor which makes it easy to mount and dismount. It's a good loader for this tractor."

John Randall, Independence, Ore.: John says he's pleased with his 2001 **Kubota 3010** equipped with a front-end loader.

Larry Gott, Shepherd, Mich.: "This tractor is a real keeper," says Larry about his 1961 **Deere 2010 utility tractor**. "My father bought it new when I was a teenager, and now it's the only tractor I own. I farm only about 15 acres and use the tractor plowing snow, mowing, and hauling firewood."

Grady L. Jordan, Clarkton, N.C.: "I like my 2001 **Deere 7410 tractor**. It appears to be everything the company said it was."

Roger Ward, Madison, Ind.: Roger's disappointed with his 1996 **International Harvester Cub Cadet 2165 tractor**. "Everything that could go wrong on it, did go wrong. This tractor is hard to work on and to service. But when it's not broke it works okay. The tractor is powered by a Briggs & Stratton engine, which I don't like. I wish the company would go back to the old-style frames."

Ken Maier, Cody, Wyo.: "I'm happy with my 1996 **Deere GT 275 garden tractor**. I use



Seventeen-year-old Jason Hellickson built a full-size backhoe following commercial do-it-yourself plans. Backhoe uses bucket to pull itself along.

Teen Built "Best Buy" Backhoe From "Do-It-Yourself" Plans

FARM SHOW first featured an innovative backhoe built by John Mikulas nine years ago (Vol. 17, No. 1). The Virginia-based engineer started a company called CAD Plans, selling detailed blueprints for do-it-yourselfers who want to build their own backhoes. He advertises regularly in *Popular Mechanics* and other magazines.

A number of readers have asked us: How good are the plans? So we recently got in touch with Jason Hellickson, a 17-year-old farm boy from Brooten, Minn., who used a set of CAD Plans to build his own backhoe. It's equipped with an 18-in. bucket. He says the plans were good and he followed them closely until about half way through the building process.

"The plans called for an 11 hp Briggs & Stratton engine. However, I couldn't justify the \$750 cost of a new engine so I substituted a small 4-cyl. diesel engine out of a 1982 Toyota B2000 pickup, which I bought from a local junk yard. I paid \$150 for it," says Hellickson.

The Toyota engine has about 60 hp which allows Hellickson to tackle a lot of tough jobs. "I've used it to dig out a lot of trees. In one scoop, I can take out a tree that's 5 in. in diameter and 10 ft. tall. I've even used it to dig out 40-ft. tall trees that were 12 in. in diameter. On average, it takes only about 5 minutes to take out a single tree."

"I've also used it to dig trenches for a local electrician who laid in electric lines. I made a small 8 in. bucket for that job. And I've

a mower deck and a rototiller with it, and both of them have performed flawlessly. No problems at all."

Albert Hanson, Elgin, Iowa: Albert's impressed with his 1997 **Case-IH 8920** and 1993 **Case-IH 9230 tractors**. "These tractors are very reliable and I'd recommend both of them to anyone. I really like the powershift transmission and reverser. However, the powershift transmission on the 8920 could run a little smoother."

Dave Linkhart, Xenia, Ohio: "Our 2001 **Long 680** gives us a lot of power at a reasonable cost. We use it to pull a 6-row planter, grain drill, and sprayer in our no-till operation. We were concerned about soil compaction and wanted a smaller tractor with no weights or loaded tires."

Dan Mulsow, Yates Center, Kansas: "It's a dependable, handy little tractor," says Dan about his 1977 **Deere 2640**. "However, it



Backhoe is towed to field or down the road behind tractor or pickup.

used it to dig holes for burying dead cattle."

Hellickson removed the transmission from the engine, then mounted it on the backhoe frame behind the seat using homemade engine mounts. The engine belt-drives a 12-gal. hydraulic pump. "The CAD plans called for a 6-gal. pump, but I used a 12-gal. pump so it wouldn't have to work as hard when digging in our heavy clay soil. I run the pump at 1,400 to 1,500 rpm's, which is just about idling," says Hellickson.

The Toyota engine was more than twice as big as the Briggs & Stratton, so Hellickson had to extend the backhoe frame and also beef it up with 4-in. sq. tubing. He also used 10-ga. steel to make his own 13-gal. fuel tank and his own oil tank.

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could use a few improvements including a more comfortable seat, easier access to the batteries, water pump, and radiator."

Annette Leer, Goshen, Ind.: "Our 1979 **International Harvester 3588** front wheel assist tractor has a lot of power and maneuverability. The only problem is that it's hard to tear apart the 4-WD transfer case."

Gordon Breit, Utica, Kansas: Gordon owns a 1977 **Deere 4630**. "We love it. We bought it used with 4,000 hours and now it has more than 8,000 hours. It has required very few repairs. The only problem is that it starts hard, which is a problem with all 30 series tractors. Also, it should have a bigger fuel tank. We added an auxiliary fuel tank."

Cristol Swaringen, Dickens, Texas: Cristol says he's "generally satisfied" with his 1985 **Ford 7710**. "It had some major problems early on that were 'kind of fixed', but then the dealer went out of business and