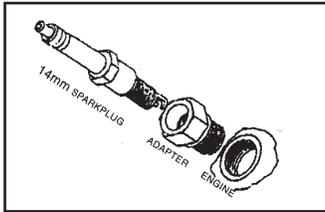


(Continued from previous page)

the satisfied owner of a **Case-IH CX90** tractor equipped with a cab. "This is the first tractor I've had that was equipped with a cab and I'm well pleased with it. The cab is roomy and quiet. The tractor had a couple small 'bugs' when it was new but the dealer took care of them. I like the electric-hydraulic system. This tractor is also easy to service."

John (last name and address unknown): He's impressed with **R.E.A.M.** spark plug adaptors (R.E.A.M. Corp., Box 311, New Lothrop, Mich. 48460 ph 517 743-9148). They're designed to let you use ordinary automotive spark plugs in old engines. An automotive spark plug screws into the adaptor, which then screws into the engine. "They're



a really high quality product. I bought some to use in the grist mill engine on a 1921 McCormick Deering. They really stopped my plug fouling problems. I had been paying \$10 apiece for 7/8-in. plugs. The R.E.A.M. adaptors sell for only \$5 apiece plus \$3 S&H. I'm thinking about buying a set for my old Ford pickup."

Tony Smith, Martin, Ga.: Tony says his 1997 **New Holland 6635** tractor equipped with a cab is his "worst buy". "I bought it used in December 2000 from a dealer who was the only previous owner and had used it on his own farm. At the time, the air conditioning appeared to work okay. Of course, it doesn't take a lot of air conditioning in December to be comfortable. When hot weather came around I realized that the air conditioner wasn't adequate for any temperature above 70 degrees. I took the tractor back but they couldn't find anything wrong with it. They performed some normal maintenance work which cost \$200 to \$300. Since then I've had several other people look at it but they couldn't find anything wrong with it, either, except that it won't cool the cab adequately. All together I've spent almost \$1,000 on it, but the air conditioner still isn't working right. The air temperature seems to be cool enough but there just aren't enough cfm's coming out of the blower. All the filters and ductwork, etc., have either been replaced or cleaned out."

"Regardless of the temperature, if the sun's shining you almost always need air conditioning. I guess I can plan on sweating it out again this summer unless someone can come up with a solution. If you've experienced this same problem, please email me (tonysmith@alltel.net)."

Paul Wiefraert, Britton, Mich.: "It's well built and has a lot of capacity," reports Paul, pleased with his 1997 **Deere 9500** combine. "It has required only scheduled maintenance service. We use it equipped with a 25-ft. platform and 6-row head which it handles with relative ease and with very little grain loss. This machine replaced our **Deere 7720 Titan II**. The dealer said I would be amazed at the difference between the two machines, and he was right. Overall, I've had good luck with anything green."

"My 2001 **Dewalt** 14-volt cordless drill is my worst buy. It works good, but the batteries don't stay charged very long so you have to buy new ones frequently, especially if you use the drill hard. We keep a couple extra batteries on hand at all times."

Vic Smith, Parkville, Mo.: Vic's happy

with his **Ford New Holland 1720** tractor equipped with a diesel engine. "This is the first new tractor on our farm. I think diesel fuel is the way to go because it's so economical. No problems. I use the tractor every day to do mowing work and to grow produce for our local farmer's market."

"My **Black & Decker** Versapack 7.2-volt cordless saw is my worst buy. It's equipped with a 3 3/8-in. blade. This tool barely has enough power to cut through thin wood and often quits working due to lack of power. It looks like new, but it just doesn't work well."

Roger Veigel, Dutton, Montana: "All my **International Harvester** tractors have been best buys. They seem to have more power than advertised, which I think is due to their high torque rise engineering. But they use only enough fuel to do the job at hand, whether it's turning windrows or primary tillage. This allows me to mix and match different power units at different locations, rather than move a specific tractor to do a specific job. The 1086 model, for example, has more than 130 pto hp but because of its 105-in. long wheelbase, positive camber angle, and mid-mount cab, it handles like a tractor half its size."

"These tractors also have ample hitch and hydraulic capacity. Like anything mechanical, they have their own unique problems such as with the steering, brakes and shift linkage, but these things are manageable because they don't cost a lot to repair and result in no down time. I bought all these tractors used, and most if not all the problems they've had are due to the previous owner's neglect or lack of knowledge of the product."

"I'm well pleased with my **New Holland** hay equipment. When it comes to commercial haying equipment I think **New Holland** is the best on the market."

John C. Reckart, Bruceton Mills, W. Va.: "Our 1986 **Deere 318** garden tractor is our best buy. We've used it every summer to mow two acres a week for 17 years and to push snow during the winter. It has also taught five grandsons how to drive. I had to replace a starter at about 2,000 hours. It's equipped with an Onan engine and hydrostatic transmission. The feature I like best is the individual rear wheel brakes. We also own a **Deere 870 4-WD** equipped with a front-end loader and backhoe. It has been trouble-free for 1,500 hours."

Walter Fifelski, Wayland, Mich.: "I can't quite believe all these farmers have as much good luck with their **Deere** equipment as they say they do. My son, who is in the excavating business, bought a new **Deere 650** dozer for \$80,000. It's his worst buy. The machine is unusable about 50 percent of the time. The dealer he works with must be factory trained at making up excuses as to why the dozer can't be fixed. My son has lost a lot of money on account of machine downtime. Bulldozers have had hydraulic blades that go up and down for more than 50 years, but not this **Deere**."

"The dealer finally told my son that nothing can be done as all these models are like that and it will take two years before the company can develop a new valve. They didn't offer him a replacement machine while his was down, either. He finally got sick of this piece of junk and traded it for a **Cat**."

Marlyn Hefli, Marshall, Minn.: A 1999 **Plymouth Voyager** minivan rates as Marlyn's "best buy". "I bought it new and have more than 38,000 miles on it. No problems. It's a great vehicle to drive. My **Dodge** truck equipped with a 4.7-liter engine has about 8,000 miles on it and is also trouble-free."

Stan Bleszinski, Oregon City, Oregon: "My **Kuhn** disc mower cuts heavy, wet, down hay with ease and almost never plugs

5th Engine Fails In "Worst Buy" Van

A couple years ago we first reported on **FARM SHOW's** "worst buy" ever, a 1995 **Ford Windstar** that was on its fifth engine at just 65,000 miles. All four replacement engines were installed between 55,000 and 65,000 miles.

The 1995 **Windstar** had a notoriously bad engine. Problems start with a bad head gasket and end with piston rods flying everywhere. In our case, the replacement engines were just as bad as the original engine.

We thought the fifth engine was the charm but recently, after putting about 27,000 miles on the engine over nearly three years, we noticed that it was starting to drink down antifreeze. That's a sure sign that the head gasket is starting to go.

Given this vehicle's track record, it makes no sense to put in another new engine. It's time to pack it in. We plan to find a new vehicle to carry our mail bags around and donate this van to a local college which



accepts vehicles as tax-free donations to give students "projects" to work on. The instructors at the school will have fun going through the repair records of this van with their students.

Since we first told our **Windstar** story, we've heard many sad stories from **FARM SHOW** readers stuck with one of these vans. Whatever you do, don't buy a used 1995 **Ford Windstar**, no matter how cheap or good-looking it appears to be. You will regret it.

Tracking A Used Vehicle's History

By Mark Newhall, Editor & Publisher

If you've bought a new or used car lately, you probably know there are now two completely different ways to do it: The traditional "go-to-the-dealer-and-dicker" method and the "buy-on-the-internet" method.

For me, buying on the internet is the way to go. Nearly every car dealer in the country now receives orders through the internet and many have one or more employees who only deal with internet sales. You can work out your best deal online - usually a couple hundred dollars over invoice - and then pick up the vehicle at a nearby dealer. You still receive all factory rebates and financing but you eliminate all the "let me talk to my manager" negotiating that's just a way to charge you more than you should pay.

If you're buying a used vehicle online, there are services that will let you check out the background of a vehicle before you sign on the dotted line. We recently decided to test one of these services.

FARM SHOW owns a rather infamous 1995 **Ford Windstar**, which has had five different engines (see story above). In addition to the engine problems, the van's speedometer has been replaced twice - once under a factory recall and once on our own nickel for \$800.

I decided to pretend that I was going to buy my own **Windstar** and went to one of the best known used vehicle information sites - www.carfax.com - to see what it could tell me about the history of the van.

up. Disc mowers have turned conventional sicklebar mowers into dinosaurs.

"My **Kuhn** tedder rake does a good job, both in the tedding position and the raking position. I think **Kuhn** builds quality products."

Mary Suttinger, Chatfield, Minn.: Mary says her **Deere Gator 4** by 6 utility vehicle is her "best buy". "Ever since it arrived at our house, we keep asking ourselves how we ever did without it. As a woman, however, I must insist that it's not just for guys. It's second nature for us now to put our equipment and tools in the **Gator's** bed and zip off to remote areas on our place. Also, this vehicle is so comfortable to ride in that I often take my 89-year-old mother on rides to see the sights. It handles easily even though it's rugged, powerful piece of equipment. Of course, as a woman I accessorize my **Gator** with a **Deere** cap appropriate for the season."

You first put in your car's Vehicle Information Number. After a brief wait, the website comes back with the type of vehicle and the number of records the site has on file about it. At this point you have to decide if you want to pay for the entire report, which costs \$14.99.

I paid by credit card and soon the report came rolling out. Here's what it told me:

It correctly stated that this was a 1-owner van with no major accidents reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles. It also stated that no odometer rollback problems had been detected and that the van was registered as a company vehicle. It said the van had never been involved in any lemon law proceedings and that no flood, hail or fire losses had ever been reported.

On the other hand, there was nothing in there about the fact that the van is currently running on its fifth engine. That's because **CarFax** does not have access to company warranty records. If any warranty work and repairs have been done, they can't give it to you. However, they do give you a list of the names and addresses of all owners so you can call them yourself, if you feel you should.

Overall, I don't think the **CarFax** report was worth the money. In my opinion, your time would be better spent checking all recall and service bulletins on the vehicle, which you can do for free at sites like www.edmunds.com, and then have the vehicle inspected by a good mechanic.

James Barton, Bath, Ontario: "My two **Echo** chain saws - one and three years old - have performed flawlessly and are my best buys. They start easy and just keep on running. My **Echo** weed eater is a best buy. It's five years old but has required only one tune-up."

"My 2000 **Polaris Expedition 425** ATV equipped with a standard transmission is my worst buy. The transmission never worked right from day one. I made repeated visits to the dealer and was told the transmission needed time to break in. However, once the warranty period was up the dealer told me it needed a new shifter and heavier springs - at my cost. My 1981 **Honda** ATV shifted better than this one. I put up with the poor transmission, but then at 1,200 miles the engine failed even though the ATV had been serviced regularly. The dealer and company told me the problem was that I hadn't warmed up the