

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

Jim Blackledge, Jet, Okla.: Jim, who has been a mechanic for more than 30 years, was working on a 1999 Ford Mustang and couldn't get the turbo oil line to come loose because the fittings were frozen. "I called the dealer to order a new line but was told the line is no longer available. However, they said their shop uses **Aero Kroil** penetrating fluid and that it works great. So I bought some and sprayed the fitting. Five minutes later it started to turn. Then I put on a little more and off came the frozen fitting. It's great stuff (Kano Labs, ph 615 833-4101; www.kanolabs.com)."

Royce Stafford, Linn, Mo.: "My **Water Furnace** geothermal heating and cooling system is my best buy (ph 800 436-7283; www.waterfurnace.com). We started using it when we built our house in 2001. Since then, our heating and cooling costs have been only about half as much as similar houses in our area. With the predicted rise in fuel costs this winter, I'm sure the savings will only increase."

"The system keeps our house to within one degree of the thermostat setting and we never feel the system starting or stopping. It cost about one third more than conventional systems, but our lower monthly bills are making up for that."

James Alvord, Noble, Ill.: "My 2002 **Argo** Bigfoot 6-wheeler is my best buy. No problems with it at all. It's easy to service and reliable. It has a lot of power and can cross ponds or waterways and muddy fields that an ordinary ATV would just sink into. It has an automatic transmission with high and low range. It steers easily with two levers and can turn tight like a skid loader. It also has a built-in Reese hitch that works great for pulling wagons or anything I can hook a chain onto."

Ronald Shull, Lakewood, Colo.: Ronald's not happy with his 2004 **Dodge** Dakota 4-WD pickup equipped with a 4.9-liter, V-8 engine and automatic transmission. "This pickup replaced a 1996 Dakota equipped with comparable features. It was supposed to be 1 mpg more fuel efficient than the 1996 model, but it actually gets 1 to 2 mpg less. In fact, I've gotten less than 12 mpg in local driving. It has had transmission problems several times, but the dealer won't do anything to help. Many convenience features that came with the 1996 model were omitted from this one such as an underhood insulation pad and light, ignition switch light, seats that are easy to fold forward and return to their original position, etc. The 1996 model wasn't perfect, but it was certainly better than this one."



Ron Bowick, Barrhead, Alta.: Ron says his best buy ever is his 1988 **Deere** 530 round baler that he bought new. It has made nearly 50,000 bales. "I quit keeping track at 43,000. I've had very limited repairs on it." Instead of paying the original new price of \$27,000, Ron bought it at the clearance price of \$20,000 when Deere's 535 model was introduced. "It's been good. The pickup teeth on this particular model were an inch longer and it feeds hay into the baler better."

Ron also has a maintenance trick he uses and thinks that has helped his baler rack up such a phenomenal performance record. "I put a liter and a half of gear oil into the roll-

ers, so the oil can seep through the seals and keep the bearings greased all the time. There's only one drawback to it. You have to park it on the level over night, otherwise the oil will seep out and run down the side of the baler. I started doing this when the baler was about 3 years old. I've never had to replace any of those bearings that have had oil in them so it has saved a lot of maintenance time. This has just been a tremendous machine."

Reid Knapp, Iron River, Mich.: "One of my best buys ever is a 1997 **Jeep** Wrangler with a Snoway snowplow. Living in northern Michigan we have our share of cold temperatures and snow. The Jeep always starts and it's amazing the snow it can move for its size. Another plus is that we get at least 22 mpg for our local runs in the summer."

James Jendro, Atlanta, Texas: "My worst buy is **Dura-Coat** coating for shop and garage floors that's designed to fill cracks, holes and pitted areas. It's supposed to eliminate painting and stop rust and corrosion dead in its tracks. I used the product but it didn't fill cracks and it got stained with tire marks that would not come off. The product was guaranteed for 2 years and they did replace it once but the replacement covering wasn't any better than the original. When I called a second time the representative on the phone was very rude."

Norman Talbot, Rochester, N.H.: "My 1999 **Kioti** 30 hp 4-WD tractor is definitely



a best buy. But my 2002 35 hp **Kioti** tractor equipped with Multitrac 4-WD turf tires is an even better buy. I'd like to see this machine get more publicity."

Gene Reeker, Meadow Grove, Neb.: "My 2004 **GM** Sierra pickup is my best buy. It replaced a 2000 Sierra that had 92,000 trouble-free miles on it. The new model is really fuel efficient and has had no problems. I've been driving GM pickups for more than 20 years."

"My worst buy is my **Shivvers** grain drying system that I bought for use inside a Butler bin. This computerized drying system has never worked right, and I haven't been able to get any help from either the company or dealer. I wouldn't recommend this product to anyone."

Marion Gatewood, Chandlersville, Ohio: "My 2005 **Red Max** brush cutter is my best buy (ph 972 423-5220; www.redmax.com). It starts easy and is powerful and lightweight."

Gerald A. Ballard, Marcus, Iowa: "I recently purchased a **Mo Jack** lift designed to raise riding mowers to clean under the deck and change blades (Norman Krug, Atlanta, Kansas ph 620 394-2470). It works well and has saved a lot of frustration and skinned arms."

Vernon Floyd Mast, Kalona, Iowa: Vernon's happy with his 2004 **Vencomatic** poultry layer colony nests (www.vencomatic.com; ph 877 934-3972). "The 10-in. belts are very easy to splice and they work great. On 220 ft. of nests I can push out the hens with one motor. There is a box where all softshell eggs are deposited without having to handle them. The nests were installed in two days with the dealer's help."



Front-end loader was easy to mount on Honda ATV, says Ruen.

Jim Ruen, Lanesboro, Minn.: "I bought a **Groundhog** loader for my ATV from Concord Equipment (www.concordequipment.com; 218 483-3307) nearly a year ago and have used it for everything from moving dirt and rocks to snow and wood chips. I've even pushed some pretty good-sized logs into place when landscaping."

"The loader isn't much bigger than a medium-sized wheelbarrow, but it still beats filling and pushing a load around by hand. Plus, the empty return trip can be made as fast as I want."

"I picked my 500 cc **Honda** Rubicon for its power, traction and CVT transmission. Adding the Groundhog was easy once I figured out how to attach the base plate to the frame. Directions with the unit suggest attaching it to the 'metal foot plates', which on this ATV are plastic."

Jim Murphy, Hazelton, Idaho: "I like my 1998 **Elmers** slide tunnel cultivator. It's a 12-row model with four guide wheels and one stabilizer disc. The cultivator protects sugar beet plants even at speeds of 6 to 7 mph. In the past we could only go 3 to 4 mph. It's also wonderful in beans. I can cultivate them in half the time at less fuel cost than before."

Richard Wentz, Chesaning, Mich.: "I've owned two **Honda** ATV's since 1987 and have only replaced the tires and batteries. I'm now 82 years old. My wife and I ride our ATV's around our farm all summer long."

Doug Enfield, Crawfordsville, Iowa: "My 2003 **Dodge** 1500 SLT pickup equipped with a Hemi engine has been reliable and trouble-free. It has plenty of power and rides good. In fact, it rides better than our Ford Windstar mini van."

"My **Troybilt** Bronco rototiller is my worst buy. This machine lunges forward if I put any down pressure on the rear tines so that I have to hang on with both hands. Their advertising shows a lady holding onto the machine with one hand while tilling sod but it wears me out just hanging on, trying to till a garden that was chisel plowed the previous fall. I wish I had never bought this machine."

Frank Vaszil, Daingerfield, Texas: Frank's impressed with **Kubota** equipment. "The quality of this company's products is unbelievable. We bought a Kubota 3050 tractor equipped with a cab and front-end loader and a 28 hp riding mower equipped with a 6-ft. deck. We also own a Kubota ATV with a cab and dump box. The company stands behind its warranty. I had a problem with a tractor before I bought my current machines and they replaced it at no cost to me."

On the negative side, he lists his 2003 **Kawasaki** Mule equipped with a diesel engine. "I lost the fuel cap and was charged \$39 for a new one. The service was terrible."

Cliff De Boom, Custer, Wash.: Cliff nominates his 2002 **Coleman** 18-volt drill as his "worst buy". "The battery died after only 16 months of use. The drill cost just \$29 but



This 48-in. blade works great for pushing snow and grading driveways.

"The two-way hydraulics are great, giving me lift and tilt. When I replace the bucket with the 48-in. blade, I can use it to dress the sides of my gravel road. The bucket tilt when applied to the blade gives me about a 4-in. cut."

a replacement battery would have cost \$79. The problem is that they're using a 24-volt charger on an 18-volt battery."

Keith L. Miller, New Sharon, Iowa: "It hasn't been in the shop since I bought it," says Keith, pleased with his 1980 **Deere** 2240 tractor. "It needs a new safety switch now, which will be the first repair I've had to make on this tractor."

Wade Olson, Parker, S. Dak.: "My 2004 **Deere** 465 All Wheel Steer lawn tractor has great maneuverability and traction, even in heavy snow."

"However, I've had trouble with my 1993 **Deere** MFWD tractor equipped with a powershift transmission. I had to change the transmission and hydraulic filters every 50 hours or so. While shifting from forward into reverse, the transmission would stick in neutral and I would have to shut down and restart the engine, then shift back to park and go. I had all the fluids checked by Deere. They told me to change all fluids and filters and go another 100 hours. After 5,000 hours of use with all these problems, three pumps had to be replaced at a cost of \$7,500. Little did I know, the brake shoes were disintegrating and plugging the filter. The company blamed the problem on operator error. Then the tractor caught fire and burned due to an electrical problem. I'm glad it's gone."

Roberta Wright, Lakeport, Calif.: "My **Kubota** BX 23 tractor equipped with a front-end loader and a backhoe is my best buy. It's small and easy to handle and is perfect for use in small spaces. Also, it's easy to change implements. It's a great size for us girls."

Wes Suddarth, Lebanon, Tenn.: Wes likes his **Deere** 328 square baler. "This baler has been exceptional. It rarely misses tying a bale - hasn't missed one in more than 1,000 bales. Also, the bales are of uniform size and stack well on my New Holland 1033 bale wagon."

"My **Deere** 926 disc mower conditioner

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