

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

load manure, handle big hay bales, and to drive in steel posts. It starts in temperatures down to 25 degrees below zero."

Paul Bessette, Stafford Springs, Conn.: Paul likes his 2009 **Kioti CK20S** compact tractor equipped with a front-end loader and backhoe. "This tractor is powerful for its size, well-built, and dependable. It had a starting problem, but the dealer took care of it."

Paul Mendezoff, North Royalton, Ohio: "I did my research before I bought this machine, and it has performed even better than expected," says Paul about his 2013 **Ariens** platinum, electric start 24-in. snow blower. "It's powered by a Briggs and Stratton Polar Force 250 cc engine that has plenty of power and starts effortlessly. The electric start feature is great, but the engine starts so easy that the electric start probably isn't even necessary. The machine's controls, layout and rugged construction are great, and the hand warmer handles on it are beyond great."

Richard Eggen, Westby, Wis.: "My **Hypertherm 600** plasma cutter is an excellent performer (ph 800 643-0030; www.hypertherm.com). It likes clean and dry compressed air. I just hook up the air pressure and turn on the power. It cuts easy and fast. The consumable torch tips last about one hour."

Jim Gesler, Worthington, Ohio: Jim nominates his 2011 **Deere HPX** Gator utility vehicle as his "worst buy". "The operator's manual says my Gator has a warning beeper that should come on whenever the parking brake is engaged, but that doesn't happen. As a result, I had to replace the brakes within the first 2 weeks of use because someone drove the Gator with the parking brake engaged. A company rep said the operator's manual is in error and refused to install a beeper."

"I've had other problems with my Gator, too. For example, I had to replace the gear shifter shaft and the variable drive belt 3 times, and also the steering shaft, CV joints, both front wheel bearings, tie rod bushings, rack and pinion assembly, and starter. I don't mistreat my equipment, as I own a **Deere 4255** tractor with 10,200 hrs. that has required no maintenance other than replacing the seals. I also own a 2004 **Ford F-350** truck with about 220,000 miles that has required only routine maintenance. But my Gator, with about 1,600 hrs. on it, has been a constant maintenance headache."

Glen Schampers, Freedom, Wis.: "My **Grasshopper 718** riding mower equipped with a 52-in. front-mount electric lift deck cuts great and never lets me down. It has 585 hrs. on it and is an awesome machine."

Nelson D. Byler, Middlefield, Ohio: "My best buy is a 1996 **Honda V-twin 20** hp. engine that's hooked up to an **American Kellogg 10** hp. air compressor. We pump a lot of air and have a 2,000-gal. setup. Both units are still going strong and have required only minor repairs. After 18 years of use, I couldn't ask for a better setup."

S.K. Lahey, Nichols, Iowa: "My **General Tire** Altimax Arctic winter tires work even better than the positive reviews I've read about them (ph 800 847-3349; www.generaltire.com). We had a lot of snow and ice last winter, but I always had good traction with these tires wherever I drove. The tires may have spun slightly 2 or 3 times, but that was it. It was almost like I was driving on dry pavement."

Bill Yewell, Ogdon, Iowa: Bill's impressed with the 2008 **Toyota Prius** he bought used with about 91,000 miles on it. "I had money earning way less than 1 percent interest in the bank and an older car that got 20 mpg. So we paid cash for the Prius and now get 45 to 50 mpg, and even better with a tailwind. This

car is fun to drive, and I've put about 28,000 miles on it with no problems. It was a good use of our money."

T. Smith, Boyceville, Wis.: "I bought a used **Kubota G2000** lawn tractor from a rental management company, which had used it for 10 years to keep up 26 apartment units. It still works as good as new."

Roy Sullivan, Jr., Cannon Falls, Minn.: "It's one of the worst pieces of new machinery I've ever owned," says Roy about his 2011 **King Kutter** 3-pt. mounted, 84-in. rear discharge finishing mower. "The clearance between the mower's caster wheels and trailing arms is a finger crusher when trying to align the mower for hookup."

"Another problem is the lifting arm bracket channel on front of the mower deck is too short, which allows the spindles on the mower's front caster wheels to hit my tractor's rear tires when turning. That caused the untimely and unnoticed removal of the lynch pins from the spindles, and ultimately, when lifting the mower, the separation of the caster wheel from the arm and loss of the spacers. The company charges \$28 just for replacement spacers."

"I bought a quick hitch to move the mower away from the tractor tires a few inches."

"After I used this mower for 2 years one of the spindle bearings failed, and not from lack of lubrication because I grease the spindles every 2 hrs. Also, the belt cover retaining studs were so misaligned that I had to cut out larger holes in order to access the grease zerks on the blade spindles."

"I bought this mower because I thought its longer 28-in. blades, coupled with the rear discharge design, would leave a nicer looking lawn. I was wrong. It leaves 3 tiny windrows across my lawn with every pass."

"Both the company and the dealer rejected my complaints. As a result I've gone back to using my trouble-free, 16-year-old, 72-in. **Farm King** rear mount finishing mower. It's one of my all-time best buys. I put hardened steel blades on the mower when I bought it and have replaced them only once. The belts and blade spindle bearings are original. This machine does a nice job of mowing and doesn't leave windrows unless I let the grass get too high before mowing."

Jim Ruen, Lanesboro, Minn.: "I recently ordered a **Firewood Gripper** from the Lee



Valley catalog (ph 800 871-8158; www.leevalley.com). My only regret is that I didn't order 2. The sharp hooks on either end of the flexible rubber hose bite into the ends of a chunk of log, while the rubber hose is easy on the hands. It's sturdy and well made. Best of all, it makes it easier to carry larger chunks of firewood to the splitting pile."

Greg Kropf, Westphalia, Kan.: "My 2012 **Honda Foreman 4**-wheeler is a durable machine that crawls along behind our milk cows twice a day without burning up clutches. However, it shifts hard. It's impossible to quickly shift from forward to reverse gear when herding cattle. Also, the 'change oil' light comes on way too often."

Leo F. Bettels, Waubun, Minn.: "My 2012 **Cub Cadet Z-Force S60** riding mower does a smooth, even job of cutting and also spreads clippings out nicely. It's easy to steer and maneuverable and stable on ditch banks. The deck height adjustment is well-



Glenn Wallis likes using the nearly silent golf cart around his property. "It's easy to get on and off, and the ball hitch I added on back works great to pull trailers," he says.

Golf Cart Great Around Farm

"I was tired of all the noisy gas engines around my small farm. It's great to drive around in an almost silent vehicle," says Glenn Wallis, River Phillip, Nova Scotia, who says his electric golf cart is his "best buy".

"Besides being quiet, it's easy to get on and off, which saves time and effort when trying to get work done. I installed a 2-in. ball hitch on back to pull several trailers that I use. It can handle surprisingly heavy loads. Great for hauling gravel, picking up branches, towing the garbage down my 300-ft. driveway, and just plain getting around my property."

"I bought it used online at www.veseyse-

quipment.com but there are many places to find used golf carts. We got an 8-year-old unit, with 1-year-old batteries, for \$1,760. Using a Kill-A-Watt meter, I have calculated that my average cost to run the cart is less than a dollar a day."

"In the past I used my garden tractor to pull my trailers around but it was noisy, less comfortable, and climbing on and off was always a nuisance. And my garden tractor doesn't have a topper to block the sun during the summer."

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designed and easy to use. The seat sat too low, so I mounted a pair of 1 1/2 by 3 by 12-in. rectangular metal tubes between the seat adjustment rails and the seat platform. It made the seat a lot more comfortable."

Monroe B. Hall, Belfast, Maine: "I like my 2012 **Gravelly ZT 50** zero-turn riding mower. All the professionals use zero-turn mowers, and I finally figured out why. My zero-turn makes it fun to cut grass and has shaved a half hour off my mowing time. It also has a comfortable rider. I added a squeeze bulb horn, a battery minder, and a compass so I can work in the fog."

Chris Haynes, Tuscaloosa, Ala.: Chris is impressed with **Pat's Easy Change System** for Cat. II 3-pt. hitches (ph 270 422-4544; www.greenwellmfg.com). "It takes all the work out of attaching 6 and 7-ft. implements to my tractor's 3-pt. hitch. Makes attachment simple and fast with no kicking, pulling or shoving."



The Easy Change system uses a spring-loaded latch that opens and locks onto the implement pins. According to the company, the system works on all makes and models of tractors and implements."

On the minus side, "After only 3 hrs. of use, the pump on my **Troybilt 2,700** psi pressure washer seized and had to be returned for repairs. High pressure hose gaskets on the pump continue to break and tear. And the soap reservoir should have a drain plug to remove excess soap."

Jake Dennis, Lapeer, Mich.: "I use my 2001 **Deere 235** GT lawn tractor to mow 2 lawns. I also use it with a **Cyclone** rake to pick up about 4 acres of leaves every year. I use this tractor like a bulldozer, but it still

works like new."

"Two years ago I bought a 1/2-in. drive **Rockwell** cordless driver drill. I haven't used it often, yet both batteries have failed and now the gear drive is going out. I plan to switch back to Sears Craftsman tools."

Mark A. Miller, Belvidere, Tenn.: "I really like my **Husqvarna 455** chainsaw. Recently the kill switch went out on it so I took it to the dealer and he promptly fixed it. It works good now."

Roger Saralampi, Meadowlands, Minn.: "My 2011 **Kuhn 5202** THA hay tedder is well built and does a nice job of trailing the tractor, and it doesn't bounce around like other tedders do. The rotors are driven by 'digidrive' finger couplings that eliminate the need for U-joints. Each rotor has 7 tine arms on it, which results in a clean pickup. I like this tedder so much that I also bought a new **Kuhn** disc mower/conditioner."

Urie Miller, Middlebury, Ind.: "I like my 2012 **Pioneer Equipment** potato plow (ph 330 737-7960; amishpioneer@aaim.com). We raise sweet potatoes and are always looking for ways to harvest faster without damaging the crop. This plow is well-designed. It bolts onto our hitch cart, which we pull with 2 horses, but I think the company could also adapt it to a tractor's 3-pt. hitch."

On the "worst buy" side, he lists **Hiland Natural** non-GMO poultry premix. "The company claimed they could match the mix we had been using for our laying hens, at a lower cost. But after 3 weeks our poultry production started dropping and we started losing birds, so we immediately switched back to feeding our original mix. We had to spend a lot of money to correct the problem."

Angela Goodman, Sevierville, Tenn.: Angela likes her **Tomcat** rat snap traps (ph 877 332-0755; www.tomcatbrand.com). The reusable traps are available in wood or durable plastic and come in both mouse and rat sizes. "I bought 10 of these traps last winter and have already caught 85 rats," says Goodman. "I spent about \$5 per trap, compared to \$25 for a bucket of the poison

Continued on next page