

## Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

I open a window, dirt falls in. Also, the tractor's electrical system had a short one day and blew fuses. Of course, the problem disappeared when the mechanic came out.

"On the plus side, because of the front axle design and cab suspension this tractor rides like a dream in the field. Unfortunately, it spends more time in the shop than in the field."

**Gary Haak, Clinton, Ontario:** "Our Deere 4430 tractor has more than 8,500 almost trouble-free hours on it and is still running strong. A few years ago we had to get the reverse gear on it fixed, but otherwise this tractor has required only routine maintenance. We use it for everything from cultivating to baling, plowing, and hauling gravity wagons. My grandfather has an identical tractor with more than 11,000 hours on it. It still has the original engine. This tractor is definitely a best buy."

**Fred Balmer, Folson, New Mexico:** Fred's a fan of Honda ATVs. "They can go thousands of miles with very little maintenance. I put more than 30,000 miles on one model and have put at least 10,000 miles on two others, and we use them in very rough ranching country. On the other hand, I wore out a Yamaha in only about 7,000 miles."

On the "worst buy" side, "My 2002 Ford F-150 Super Crew pickup equipped with a 5.4-liter gas engine has more than 110,000 trouble-free miles. However, due to poor engineering it's almost impossible to change some of the spark plugs. Some shops won't even work on them. I don't know why manufacturers don't use a small diesel engine in their light duty pickups. My Ford F-250 pickup equipped with a Powerstroke engine has more than 170,000 miles on it but still has the original glow plugs, brakes, etc. It's also very fuel efficient. No more gas engines for me."

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**Christian Uthe, Wellsville, Mo.:** Christian likes his 2007 Miller Bobcat 250 engine-driven welder. "It has performed flawlessly both for welding work and for generating auxiliary power to operate shop tools. I use it on my truck in my welding business."

His 2007 Harbor Freight sheet metal cutter rates as a "worst buy". "This metal cutter is advertised to cut 16-gauge steel, but it wouldn't do that for me. Even when I used more air pressure and cfm's than required it would only 'nibble' an inch of metal at the most without locking up. It does cut 18-ga. steel really well."

**Ray Van Hercke, Little Falls, Minn.:** Ray's a dealer for the Boss RT III "V" pickup snowplow that changes angle on-the-go. "I became a dealer because it's the best snowplow on the market. Moves more snow than any other plow in less time."

**Chester Grabski, Devon, Alberta:** Chester likes his 2005 Massey Ferguson 2300 tractor equipped with a 23 hp diesel engine. "It's equipped with a front-end loader and belly-mounted mower deck, as well as a pto and 3-pt. hitch. This tractor is very handy for cutting grass and the loader works great for moving snow and lots of other jobs. It has a plug-in so it always starts right up in an unheated shop."

"My 2001 Honda 250 4-wheeler ATV is my worst buy. The shifter had to be replaced

three times at a cost of about \$1,000 each time. The rest of the machine works okay."

**J. Wayne Green, Millgrove, Ontario:** "I like my 2005 Tecumseh chainsaw sharpener. I use it to sharpen the chains on saws used in my son's tree business, and also to sharpen the chains on neighbors' saws. It has quick and easy adjustments."

**Kenneth G. Gadd, Moose Jaw, Sask.:** "My 2005 Ford 500 Limited all-wheel-drive car has all I could ask for. Its 4-WD system has much better control than the 4-WD found in trucks and has been trouble-free."

**Dennis Drake, Ault, Colo.:** Dennis likes his Deere 7400 MFWD tractor but says it has nevertheless had some problems. "It's an excellent tractor with great traction and power for its size. However, it has a really poor 3-pt. hitch. We have to push the hitch down with a front-end loader just so we can hook it up. The company said in time it will get better, but that hasn't happened."

He's disappointed with his AgriTronics Gatekeeper. It uses a heat sensitive eye to detect cattle trying to pass through a gate opening. When it detects one, it's supposed to activate a loud siren that scares them away. "The problem is the eye doesn't see," says Drake. "Also, my cattle got used to the noise of the siren and would walk right through the gate. I also tried it on horses but after three weeks it didn't work on them, either. I called the company but they wouldn't help."

**Web Hatley, Mt. Holly, N.C.:** "I like my 1981 Yanmar YM2310D tractor equipped with a box scraper and front-end loader. It's a powerful little diesel tractor that does a good job of landscaping. It's easy on fuel."

**Cletus Arnold, Roodhouse, Ill.:** "My 2006 Bobcat 5600 Toolcat utility vehicle is my best buy. I use it with a post hole digger, 6-ft. mower, and bucket. I have about 100 acres of pasture land on which I'm replacing the fences and removing the hedges. All the attachments fit on the front of this vehicle, making it easy to see what I do. It's easy to operate and saves a lot of time."

**Garry Overton, Gatineau, Quebec:** Gary likes his 1999 Finn hydraulic-operated wood grapple equipped with a rotator and a 52-in. opening. "I mounted the grapple and rotator on a 5-ft. boom on my loader tractor and use it to skid and load firewood and pulp from 2 ft to tree length. Eliminates the need to climb on and off the tractor all the time to hook and unhook skidding chains and chokers."

On the "worst buy" side, "I used my 2006 Jonserud 2038 chainsaw only lightly, but even so it didn't last 25 hours."

**Walt Schultz, Laurens, Iowa:** Walt likes his 2006 Dickey-john grain tester. "It works just like the new ones that elevators use except that it's a little slower to test grain - about 25 seconds. We've compared it many times with the local elevator's tester and found that we were the same or within one or two tenths of a point. It has a printer that prints your farm's name, grain, moisture, temperature, test weight, date and time."

Walt says his Headlight Inc. corn header height control is a best buy (ph 574 546-5022; www.headlight.com). It comes with a poly contact arm and a trip mechanism that allows backing up without raising the header. The "no rip-off" sensor design allows backing up without causing damage to the sensing unit or the header. Because the arm is spring-loaded it can return to its natural position. Electrical adapters for unmatched combines and headers are available.

"We had some down corn this year so we decided to put this header control on. We're happy with it as it plugs into the combine wiring with no need to cut any wires and it also attaches to bolts already on the header. The company helped us fine tune it before it

left the shop. In the field, all we have to do is set the height control from the cab. The unit also operates the contour master to keep the header level with the ground."

**Ronald Goff, Perry, Kansas:** "It starts right up every time and has been trouble-free," reports Ronald, pleased with his 2005 Kubota MX 5000 4-WD tractor equipped with a front-end loader. "It has more than 100 hours on it. I use it mostly to mow hay and to do general haying work on 20 acres of hay, and to spread manure."

"My two Olympic chainsaws, models 970 and 962, both work great and are best buys."

**Robert Himmerich Valencia:** Robert nominates his 1946 Farmall H tractor as his all-time "best buy". "We're the third owner and it was our only tractor for 15 years. We added live hydraulics and a 3-pt. hitch. We still use this tractor every day all year long."

He's well pleased with his three Dodge pickups. "We've put a lot of miles on them. Our 1989 model has more than 600,000 miles on it, our 1992 has about 350,000 miles, and our 2002 3500 equipped with a Cummins diesel engine has about 135,000 miles. These pickups just keep on going and average a respectable 18 mpg."

"All our equipment is bought used. Some of it requires more tender loving care than others. We start by making sure that anyone who operates a machine uses an operator's manual. We get a maintenance manual before doing any wrench work. Half of our inventory is someone else's worst buy, but that's okay because we feel that most 'worst buy' problems come from not reading or understanding the operator's manuals."

**Loyal Martin, Philadelphia, N.Y.:** "I really like my Badger silage wagons. They've been trouble-free."

A 3-pt. mounted, pto-operated concrete mixer from Agri-Supply rates as his "worst

buy". "It cost \$599 plus shipping and handling, which I didn't think was too bad. However, this mixer doesn't perform as expected. It's built way too light for mixing concrete. It's built more like a compost mixer."

**John Anderson, Grand Coulee, Wash.:** "I'm totally pleased with my 2001 GM 2500 heavy duty 4-WD pickup equipped with a Duramax 6.6-liter, turbo diesel engine and Allison transmission. It has more than 115,000 miles on it but has been maintenance-free. When pulling a 30-ft. travel trailer to Tucson, Arizona, at an average speed of more than 70 mph it got better than 16 mpg. It consistently averages 18 1/2 mpg in local driving which includes going over local mountain passes. It's the most user friendly pickup I've ever owned. I have no reason to trade pickups again."

**Richard V. Crump, Cahaan, Ct.:** Richard's the proud owner of a 2006 Deere 2320 4-WD tractor equipped with a 24 hp diesel engine and hydrostatic transmission. "It handles a 5-ft. Bush Hog and a 6-ft. Land Pride rear discharge finish mower with ease. The 4-WD makes it very sure footed on side hills. The hydrostatic drive transmission allows me to drive slowly forward while keeping my 5-ft. rototiller turning at high speed."

**Jeff Smith, Millstone, N.J.:** "I like my 2005 Kubota BX23 tractor equipped with a front-end loader, backhoe attachment, and 60-in. belly mower. It has almost 150 hours on it with no problems. I highly recommend this tractor to others."

**David Terrell, Union, Miss.:** David says his 1973 Troybilt tiller is his "all-time best buy". "I bought it new in 1973 when I didn't know if I would ever own a tractor, so it got plenty of use in my gardens. After going through three sets of tines and two engines, we retired it in 2003 and bought a new Troybilt. It's also a mighty fine machine."

## 'Best Buy' Geothermal Furnace

Saving money was the big reason Gerald Inglebret installed a combination oil and wood furnace when he and his wife Annette built their home in 1979. However, after a few years, he found himself using very little wood while burning 600 gal. of oil a year. When he heard about geothermal heat 20 years later, he recognized it could be a way to not only cut heating bills, but reduce cooling costs as well. They turned to a local heating contractor who specialized in geothermal installations.

"It cost a little over \$10,000 in 2001, which included a new furnace, air conditioner and a pre-heater for hot water," says Inglebret. "Our heating costs since have averaged only \$200 and cooling less than \$100 a year. At today's fuel oil rates of more than \$3/gal., we would be spending \$1,800 a year just on heat."

The Inglebrets' only cost is for electricity to power a pump and a fan. An antifreeze and water solution in 1,200 ft. of plastic pipe buried 7 to 8 ft. deep in the front yard provides the heat. When pumped through their heat pump furnace, heat is pulled out and transferred into the plenum of the original oil and wood furnace for distribution through the air vents. The system also heats hot water for the home.

In the summer, warm air from the house is drawn back through the heat exchanger, transferring heat to the liquid solution in the pipes. As the warmed solution is pumped back through the pipes, the heat is dispersed to the earth.

Annette Inglebret notes that the air coming out of the vents feels cooler than expected from a traditional furnace. The difference is

due to the geothermal produced air being drawn off at 72°.

"It brings the heat in the room up a little slower, but there are no flames or fumes," she says.

The Inglebrets further reduce their costs by taking advantage of an off peak hours program from their local electric cooperative. If demand is too high, electricity to their geothermal system can be shut off. So far, Inglebret says, service has rarely been interrupted long enough to start the backup oil furnace.

"When we installed the new geothermal system, we had 70 gal. of fuel oil left in the tank," he recalls. "Seven years later, there are still at least 6 in. of fuel oil left."

Even though their co-op recently raised rates, the Inglebrets say their costs remain low. "For the first 28 days of November this year, we spent \$34.20 to heat the house and about half that to heat water," he says. "Even at the lower rates and lower fuel oil costs, the system more than paid for itself in five years."

Inglebret points out that a geothermal system can be installed in holes drilled into the earth if there isn't sufficient room to lie horizontally. Either way, the system is expected to last a long time.

"The pipes are guaranteed for 50 years, but are expected to last 200 years," he says. "Even the heating system is expected to last 5 to 10 years longer than a traditional furnace."

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