

BUYING TIPS YOU CAN USE

Randomly selected farmers “tell it like it is” in nominating their “best” and “worst” buys.

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Farmers Nominate Best, Worst Buys

OPINION

Kathleen and Jim Smolinski, Andover, Ohio: Kathleen and her husband, Jim, are seeing red over problems they're having with a green tractor.

“We bought a **Deere** 4850 MFWD tractor new in 1983,” Kathleen says. “It has only 2,096 hours on it now so it's not as though we've been over working it. But last December, the tractor simply quit moving. We hauled it to a local Deere-trained service technician with 20 years experience. He said the clutch and separator plate had gone out, stopping the tractor and breaking the transmission oil lines.

“He was well versed on this situation, having fixed three other early model 4850's with the same problem. Turns out, a Deere ‘fix as fail’ service bulletin (R 86-50-9) was issued to dealers in August of 1986 identifying this problem.

“We had our tractor fixed at a cost of \$3,365 for parts and \$621 for labor, and feel that Deere should reimburse us for the parts that the service bulletin seems to suggest are defective. Our service technician says Deere has paid for parts on the three other tractors he's fixed and agrees with us that this should never have happened to a tractor with so few hours on it.

“However, we've spoken with three dif-

ferent Deere officials both in Ohio and company headquarters and we've just been getting the run-around, in part, because the tractor's 15 years old. It's pretty frustrating since we contend ‘fix as fail’ means exactly what it says regardless of how old the tractor is.”

Jim Manley, Freer, Texas: Jim's “best buy” is a 1991 1-ton **Dodge** pickup because of its Cummins turbocharged engine and 3:55 rear gear ratio.

“I bought it with 140,000 miles on it. It now has 170,000 and gets 20 mpg on the road. It pulls heavy loads of hay and livestock as easily as it ever did and still gets 10 mpg. One big criticism is that the rest of the truck isn't nearly as hearty as the engine. For example, the 5-speed transmission has short bearing life and only part-time synchronizers. The body is no dream, either. The top part of the driver's side door is bent and will not close so the wind screams through it in a crosswind.”

On the negative side, Jim's “worst buy” is a 1991 3/4-ton **Ford** pickup equipped with a 351 cu. in. engine with automatic overdrive transmission. “I get less than 9 mpg in overdrive. When using cruise control, it won't hold its speed up the slightest hill or even in a 15 mph wind. The engine could best be used as a boat anchor. I must admit, however, that it has a strong, reliable body and offers a comfortable ride.

“The decision by Ford Motor Co. to eliminate the Cummins as an engine in its small

trucks was not a ‘better idea’.”
Rod Rhoades, North Star, Alberta: “The best new product I've bought in the last 10 years is a Model 128 **Mobile Dimension** sawmill,” says Rod (Mobile Manufacturing Co., P.O. Box 250, Troutdale, Ore. 97060; ph 503 666-5593). “It's one of those rare products that works better than advertised. I've cut over 1 million board feet of lumber since I bought it. This mill is a precision machine and is likely to run virtually forever with reasonable care. Any problems I've had with it have been entirely my fault.”

George A. Reed, Louisburg, Kan.: A 1995 **Deere** 6400 tractor with front-wheel-assist and equipped with a 640 mechanical self-leveling bucket is George's “best buy”.

“It's a pleasure to do chores with,” George says. “The loader's controlled with a joystick, has a quick-tach bucket and bale spear for big round bales, and a forklift attachment for handling pallets. My wife also runs this tractor since it's easy to operate with the quad transmission. I've put 1,600 hours on it with only minimal maintenance.”

Jim Kehoe, Lansdowne, Ontario: Jim's “best buy” is a **Claas** 44 Rollant round baler that he bought used.

“It cost less than half the price of a new one. I've baled over 6,000 bales of hay, straw and silage with it and it's been virtually trouble-free. It makes a great-shaped bale every time. They stand the weather better than bales from any other baler I've used.”

Norman Youngman, Jamesport, Mo.: “My ‘worst buy’ is a **Trojan** propane stock tank heater I bought new last January,” says Norman (Trojan Livestock Equipment, Conrad, Iowa). “It collected so much moisture on the inside, it put the pilot light out three times. After that, I took it out of the tank because I couldn't depend on it working.”

Dennis Ruensh, East Peoria, Ill.: “If I'm not farming I'm fishing and this outboard motor has performed flawlessly,” says Dennis, pleased with his 1996 **Yamaha** outboard with electric start and oil injection system. “It starts in 20 degree weather, trolls at idle all day and runs great. The 2-year warranty just ran out and it's never been back to the shop. I've ruined one aluminum and one stainless steel prop but nothing hurts the engine.”

On the other hand, he had bad luck with a 1997 **Motor Guide** 52-lb. thrust 12-volt trolling motor with electric start. “It didn't last five minutes on the first trip out. It has constantly been in the shop during its 1-year warranty. It looks good and is priced right but it won't perform. It's a piece of junk.”

Justin Schafer, Portland, Ind.: Justin's well satisfied with his 1998 **Chevy** 2500 pickup equipped with 5.7 liter engine.

“It looks good, has plenty of power, a comfortable cab, and lots of accessories. The 3.78:1 gear ratio is too low, requiring higher engine rpm's which results in poor gas mileage - 10 to 12 1/2 mpg. Otherwise, I'm quite pleased.”

James Bopp, Cogswell, N. Dak.: “I bought it with 8,000 miles on it. Soon after, I traveled 3,300 miles through ice, snow and cold in the Rocky Mountains and averaged 16 mpg,” says James about his “best buy” 1996 **Ford** F-150 4-WD pickup. “It handles as well as our Lincoln Town Car.

“I also added a remote auto start, which turned out to be a real convenience. It lets me start the truck from my kitchen or motel room.” (DesignTech International Inc., 7955 Cameron Brown Court, Springfield, Va. 22153; ph 703 866-2000).