

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

Tell Us About Your “Best or Worst” Buy

Send your nominations to:
**FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029,
Lakeville, Minn. 55044, or use
the survey form on our website at
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Greg Evans, Richwood, Ohio: Greg is disappointed with his 2000 **Caterpillar Lexion 450** combine. “This combine may be an excellent machine, but the company doesn’t stand behind it. I complained for three years before I finally got Claas/Cat’s attention on a grain quality problem. That was supposed to be their selling point - grain quality, and one-on-one support.

“This machine has other issues as well. The preparation pans under the concave build up with soybean dust, which has to be chiseled off every morning to prevent grain loss. The company’s answer to this was to build a long-handled chisel that I could use on my \$200,000 machine. Another problem was the machine’s weight. It would leave much deeper wheel ruts than our Deere 9500 running beside it. Also, grain unloading speed was very slow in comparison. The company did make regular updates to the machine, but they didn’t want to compensate anyone for being their ‘guinea pig’. Another issue was a warranty that includes parts only, which results in a \$500 service call every time we have a problem.

“All these problems were brought to the company’s attention several times and even-

car now has 617,000 miles on it but still runs great. Living out in the country, I have to drive 52 miles to and from work each day. The diesel engine hasn’t missed a beat since I bought the car. I wonder if it will ever quit. I change the oil every 3,000 miles and never have to add oil. It gets about 25 mpg and is an efficient car for its weight and size. The Germans really had it together with this car. I’ve had nine Mercedes Benz cars in the past, but none with as many miles as this one. In my opinion it’s the best car on the road.”

Stanley O’ Neal, Hartsville, S.C.: “My **Parmar 33** electric fence charger is my best buy. It works better than any charger I’ve used before.”

Ken Scharabok, Waverly, Tenn.: “I bought a ‘Nick the Grinder’ chain saw sharpener from **Harbor Freight** (www.harborfreighttools.com). Most commercial shops take so much off the teeth that after three sharpenings the chain saw chains are almost



useless. While it may look like a toy, this is a serious piece of equipment. It’s very simple to set up and takes off only what’s required to get the chain sharp, meaning I can get several times the number of uses out of a chain versus professional sharpening. It sells on the website for \$79.99. I estimate the machine will pay for itself in one season of firewood cutting.”

Andrew Abrams, Marcellus, Mich.: “My 1970 **Case 220** lawn tractor is my best buy. My father bought it when I was in junior high school 30 years ago and now it has been handed down to me. It’s powered by a Kohler 10 hp engine which we’ve replaced or rebuilt twice in the past 20 years. We use this tractor to mow and plow snow. The hydraulic drive won’t give up and the mower deck is still in great condition. The only weak spot was the pto clutch, which we became really good at working on. We haven’t had a problem with it for years. This tractor is great for kids to learn to drive since the directional control is right on the steering column. Why doesn’t anyone sell a tractor this well built any more?”

On the “worst buy” side, he lists his **Black and Decker 4-in. angle grinder**. “I have a foundry/fab shop and really like how these grinders work. But they won’t last more than a few months.”

Neal and Mary McCleary, Elkton, Md.: “Our **1988 Deere AMT 5-wheeler**, powered by a Kawasaki engine, is our worst buy. The engine needed a new starter which cost me \$540 because engine parts can be purchased only from a Deere dealer - not a Kawasaki dealer. Replacement brakes for this rig are also overpriced. I won’t buy a Deere Gator equipped with a Kawasaki engine ever again.

“The **Firestone 18.4 by 34** radial tires on my tractor have bulges and ride rough on hard roads. Unfortunately the company won’t replace the tires. They said the problem is caused by rusty wheel rims. I had Goodyear tires with the same problem but the company replaced two of them free of charge.

“Our 2002 **Deere 926** disc mower equipped with an impeller conditioner is a best buy. It cuts fast and does a good job of conditioning. The only problem is that the windrow lever catches on everything and ei-

ually I got a reaction - they wanted to sell me one of their newer models. After watching the machine depreciate at a high rate of speed, I decided to get out while the machine was still worth a little more than scrap price. I traded it in for a used Deere. The Cat/Claas dealer offered me just 50 percent of what I originally paid for the machine three years earlier toward the used green machine on their lot. It doesn’t say much for the Lexion combine when its own dealers don’t think it has any value.”

Clint Lowe, Jr., Julian, N.C.: Clint isn’t happy with his 2000 **Deere LX176** lawn tractor. “With Deere’s reputation for quality, I had high hopes for this tractor. However, I’ve had nothing but trouble with it. Soon after I bought it, it started running rough and required engine work. Then every few months, something else would go wrong. The steering linkage has broken twice, bearings in the mower deck had to be replaced about six months after purchase, and the deck lift handle has never worked right. There have been numerous other problems, too. The dealer has been very helpful, offering pickup and delivery whenever the tractor had to go to the shop.

“I renewed the tractor’s warranty after two years because of all the trouble I continued to have. As expensive as this tractor was, I had hoped that it would last for years without much trouble, especially during the first few years. It only has about 500 hours on it now, and it’s looking like I’ll have to replace it long before I had hoped.”

On the “best buy” side, he lists his 1984 **Mercedes-Benz 300SD** diesel sedan which he bought used two years ago with 580,000 miles on it. “The engine is original and has never been overhauled nor had any major work done on it. The automatic transmission was overhauled at the time I bought it. This