

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

Jarret Pine, Paris, Ill.: "My 2000 Deere 6 by 4 Gator is my best buy. It's big enough to seat two large men, yet small enough to maneuver through the woods. It has a large cargo box and enough power to pull just about anything. It's equipped with a V-twin 614cc gas engine and has high flotation tires, so it has enough power and traction to go anywhere. It works much like a small truck. I'm well pleased with it.

"My 1997 Chevrolet 1/2-ton Z71 pickup equipped with a Vortec 350 engine and an off-road package is a best buy. It has a lot of power and the cab has a lot of room. I love it and will probably never get rid of it. It's a great work truck and can pull and haul a lot.

"I love this pickup and will probably never get rid of it."

It's equipped with a third door which I really like."

Charlie Brown, Clatskanie, Oregon: "It's easy to drive, has a lot of power, and is reasonably fuel efficient," says Charlie about his Kubota 3710 tractor.

Elbert Harper, Tipton, Ind.: "We like our 2001 Deere 250 skid loader. Everything on it is handy. It's rated to lift 1,700 lbs. but will easily pick up 2,800 lbs. The company did a good job engineering and building this machine."

Gene Mouser, Marquand, Mo.: "We like our 2002 Grasshopper 220 mid-mount riding mower. It's fast, maneuverable, dependable, and more cost efficient than other comparable brands."

Chad Travis, Drasco, Ark.: "In the last issue of FARM SHOW a Texas man said that based on his experience, he wouldn't recommend the Magnum cutting torch for the average farmer. He said it burns very hot but is difficult to control and expensive to run. As a certified welder and diesel technician, I've had a similar experience with my Magnum torch. It has a lot of power, but it has some drawbacks. I don't recommend that anyone get rid of their oxygen, acetylene, or plasma cutter before buying a Magnum. However, it burns hot and works good for penetrating thick material beyond conventional means. I've actually used it to cut holes in rocks up to 6 in. thick and to cut cast iron. One time I used it to cut a notch in a 27-in. dia., 4-in. thick flywheel. It also works good for washing out large welds. However, the rods for it are expensive and don't last long enough. It throws a lot of fire and sparks."

He's "generally satisfied" with his 1996 Deere 5300 4-WD tractor but says it could use a few improvements. "It has adequate power and hydraulics. However, I think this tractor is too light on back to be used with a front-end loader. The grill and fenders are made of plastic, and the seat is poor quality. I built a bumper and grill guard and added a pair of 3 by 5-in. lights on the fenders. I added a 6-hole trailer plug so I can hook up implement lights. I built a skid plate that goes from the bumper to the drawbar. I also made hose protectors to cover the hydraulic hoses on the loader."

Cliff Grulke, Minneapolis, Minn.: Cliff likes his Menards garden cultivator. "The cast metal on it isn't very durable, but it works good for working grass seed into thin turf. This cultivator is a 'knock-off' of another commercial model.

"My 1996 Ford Ranger pickup equipped with a 4-cyl. engine and manual transmission is a best buy. It had more than 350,000 miles on it, and if I hadn't forgot to replace the timing belt I'd still be driving it."

Lawrence Gilmour, Porcupine Plain, Sask.: "My 1974 Cub Cadet 1200 garden tractor is my best buy ever. All I've ever replaced was a pressure plate in the clutch. When our kids were small they used this tractor as a go-cart. I also like my Cub Cadet 1250 and 129 Hydro models."

Vaughn Borchers, Gilman, Ill.: Vaughn's impressed with the service provided by John Beery of Bement, Ill., who specializes in servicing Steiger tractors (ph 217 763-6616). Beery salvages, reconditions, overhauls, repowers, and also leases out Steiger tractors. "Beery is a very nice man and has saved me thousands of dollars on my Steiger."

Douglas V. Spencer, Fenwick, W. Va.: Douglas is impressed with his Troy-Bilt rototiller. "I had been using Gravley tillers for 25 years until I bought this one. It has no trouble working my rocky ground, and I immediately fell in love with the machine. It's much easier to operate, less tiring, and more economical than anything else I've ever used."

Mike Isele, Divide, Colo.: "I like my 2002 Built-Rite firewood processor (Built-Rite Mfg. Corp., 750 East Hill Rd., Ludlow, Vt. 05149 ph 800 757-2520 or 802 228-7293; email: builtrite@tds.net). This machine works quickly and efficiently and isn't too hard on my pocket book. It saves time and money on labor costs."

Mark Doudlah, Evansville, Wis.: "We bought one of the first Deere 9650 STS combines in our area in 1999. We were very disappointed to discover that the combine was putting anywhere from 1 1/2 to 3 1/2 bushels of corn on the ground, and 3/4 of a bushel of beans.

"Until we bought the new Deere we had been using a 1979 model IH1460 and we didn't realize what a great combine it was. There was virtually no grain loss behind that machine.

"To find the problem with the STS we must have rolled the chopper away more than 100 times. We would make adjustments in air flow, sieve setting, concave clearance, and ground speed. We got pretty good at correlating what was what, but it was a maddening time.

"In our opinion, when you pull the chopper away, you can really tell what's going on. The chopper hides a lot of losses and spreads them out to such an extent that you say, 'Well, that doesn't look so bad.'

"In some places we were counting 56 seeds per square foot behind the separation section of the combine. And I'm not talking about head loss - I'm talking about material that was in the combine that's now laying on the ground.

"We had three different company reps out but nobody could really make it work much better. We finally ended up installing a Kuchar concave threshing assembly from Kuchar Combine Performance in Carlinville, Ill. (ph 217 854-9838). It was very easy to see the improvement. We had a six-row head on that machine and we could tell what was going on without even rolling the chopper out of the way.

"To my knowledge, Deere has not made changes on their STS models to fix the problem. However, they do have three different concaves: the round pipe and a more traditional concave (small wire and large wire). When you buy a new combine model that hasn't been in the field, you take what the dealer recommends.

"As far as I know most of the machines that have come into our area have the round bar concave. Once we changed out of that concave to the Kuchar concave, our field losses disappeared.

"I heard for years people saying that Deere



Tom Olding has used his 1995 Dodge Ram 3500 diesel pickup to deliver Airstream travel trailers from the factory to dealers, logging about 110,000 miles per year.

1995 Dodge Logs One Million Miles

Tom Olding, Fort Recovery, Ohio, thinks the head gasket may be going out on the engine in his 1995 Dodge Ram 3500 diesel pickup.

That might make it a "worst buy" candidate except for the fact that this truck just recently passed the 1 million mile mark and the engine has never been touched. Nearly everything about the pickup is original. "I bought it new when it came out in 1994," he says about the extended cab pickup with a Cummins diesel.

Olding can't say enough good things about that engine. "I've changed the oil every 9,000 miles, and routinely changed air filters. I've replaced the fuel pump a couple of times, but it has the original injectors. I had to put a water pump on it at about 750,000 miles. I've worn out a couple of clutches, and fifth gear has gone out of the transmission twice," he says.

"But with more than a million miles on the pickup, I'd have to say I've gotten my money's worth out of it," Olding says.

He has used the pickup to deliver Airstream travel trailers from the factory to dealers, driving for KBT Trucking Co. He delivers an average of about one trailer a week, logging somewhere around 110,000 miles per year.

He believes he holds the record for the most miles on a pickup with the original engine. "I didn't start out to put that many miles on it," he says. "I've worked for KBT for going on 15 years, and started out with a Ford F-350 with a diesel engine. I put 572,000 miles on it before I replaced it with another F-350. The engine on the second one started smoking after only about 240,000 miles so I traded it on the 1995 Dodge.

"When the Dodge passed up my first Ford in mileage, I figured I'd put 600,000 miles



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on it. It kept going strong, so every time I passed another 100,000 mile mark, I'd decide to go for the next one. It wasn't long before it had 900,000 on it and I figured I might as well drive it a million miles," he says.

When he passed his goal, he bought another 3500 Dodge Ram with the same engine. "I found a 1996 that had only 160,000 miles on it. It had been well-maintained, and I figured it might be as good as the older one."

He now uses the well-traveled pickup for shorter trips, but says he still wouldn't be afraid to head off on a long delivery with it. "It doesn't have the power it did when it was new, but it'll still handle a 26-ft. travel trailer just fine," he says.

Cummins Diesel Engine Co. invited him to display his million-mile pickup at the plant in Columbus, Indiana in May when the company celebrated the production of its millionth engine. A video commemorating the occasion will include footage of Olding's Cummins-powered pickup.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tom Olding, 411 Fox Road, Fort Recovery, Ohio 45846 (ph 419 375-4643).

couldn't make a rotary combine," and then when they finally launched their rotary combine, they confirmed that the doubters were right—they weren't, in fact, capable of making a rotary combine that worked as well as others."

Charles Willingham, Chiple, Fla.: "My DR Trimmer is a worst buy. It was in the shop more than it was on my farm where I needed it. The problem is that the manufacturer doesn't have any repair shop to send you to, so they just pick one for you which can lead to problems. My machine was in one repair shop for 4 1/2 weeks."

Glen Garver, Ava, Ill.: "Our 1998 Aerway tillage implement does a good job. I use it to prepare the soil during the fall before no-till planting the following spring. It leaves the residue on top of the ground."

Randy Eilerts, Mulvane, Kansas: "My 1993 Dodge Ram 3/4-ton 4-WD pickup equipped with a Cummins diesel engine and manual transmission is my best buy. It has more than 230,000 miles on it. All I've done is change the oil and replace the tires. It av-

erages 21 to 22 mpg. We use it to haul hay, firewood, and steel fencing pipe. It does all these jobs with ease. I'd recommend heavy duty Dodge pickups to anyone."

Leland Brendle, Dickens, Texas: A 1950 Farmall M tractor that runs on propane gas rates as Leland's "best buy". "I bought it used 17 years ago and it's the most dependable tractor I've ever owned. Over the years I've used it for plowing, shredding and baling hay. It has covered a lot of ground. It's equipped with a 3-pt. hitch which is very handy. It's also easy on fuel."

On the negative side, he lists his Dodge Dakota pickup equipped with a V-6 engine and automatic transmission with overdrive. "It ran good and was a pleasure to drive. However, it was really hard on fuel and got only 16 1/2 mpg. When gas prices reached \$1.75 per gallon we decided to trade it for a 2000 Chevrolet Lumina car, which gets more than 30 mpg."

Wade Hancock, Cullman, Ala.: Wade's

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