

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

Nayyar Malik, Anchorage, Alaska: "My favorite tractor is my 1961 Massey Ferguson 35. It still runs like a new tractor and has been trouble-free over the years. It has all the features of a modern tractor including a 3-pt. hitch, draft control, hydraulics, etc."

Douglas Brown, Alleman, Iowa: "Our 2000 Sophtec water conditioner softens our water magnetically without requiring any salt or electricity. It almost completely eliminates hydrogen sulfide odors. It's a great product."

On the "worst buy" side, he lists his **Sears Craftsman** bench top belt and disc sander. "We didn't use it for more than a year after we bought it. The first time we used it the motor started smoking. Since the product was more than a year old, the company wouldn't honor the warranty. I think this sander was defective the day it was made."

E. Woody Johnson, Osakis, Minn.: "Our Dodge Dakota 4-WD pickup, equipped with a 3.9-liter, V-6 engine, is a best buy. It starts good and rides and handles nice. It has more than 160,000 miles on it but has required few repairs, and it still doesn't use much oil. My only complaint is that it isn't very fuel efficient - no better than my former full-sized Dodge pickup which had a V-8 engine."

"My Poulon 'Wild Thing' chain saw is my worst buy. It starts hard and often quits running when I'm using it, and it won't start again until the motor cools off. The oiler system is poorly designed and always leaks out whenever the saw is stored in its case. I've owned many saws over the years and am a small engine mechanic, so I think I know what I'm talking about. This saw is junk."

Luke Swantz, Kalona, Iowa: "Our 1990 New Holland 144 hay inverter is an excellent machine. It handles hay very gently without knocking off leaves like a conventional hay rake or tedder. It speeds up drying time by 12 hours, or more. It also doesn't rope up the hay like a conventional rake does."

Bill White, London, Ontario: "My Dixon zero turn riding mower is my worst buy. I really like how it cuts, but I've had problems with two shafts. The problem is that the shafts are too soft and bend next to the bearing. Both times I had the shafts tested and found that they weren't. The company wouldn't help at all. I had to spend about \$700 on repairs."

Terry Schmidt, Chapman, Kansas: "My 1993 Belarus 805 tractor has been an economical, dependable tractor and is my best buy. It's easy to work on and parts for it are reasonably priced. The hydraulic hoses and electrical components on it aren't built with the same quality as they are on more popular tractor brands, but these components can be easily replaced."

Joseph deNatale, Pittsfield, Maine: Joseph says Harbor Freight tools are his "worst buy". "I've purchased several of the company's tools for use in my apple orchard. Even though their tools are priced cheap they're usually okay for occasional use. However, when some of the tools became defective I soon discovered the company's customer service leaves a lot to be desired."

"I bought a titanium-plated drill bit set and a cold chisel set. Several of the drill bits were so soft I could bend them by hand, and when I used some of the chisels they shattered. I

"Best Buy" Electronic Air Gauge

My wife gave me an electronic air pressure gauge for Christmas. It's a "best buy".

I've never liked the normal plunger-type mechanical pressure gauges because they never seem to get a correct reading the first time. It always seemed like I had to take two or three readings to make sure I got a true reading.

So I was interested when I read about some new electronic gauges last year. But they were selling for \$29.95 and that was a bit steep for a minor tool like that. However, when I saw Radio Shack had one for \$9.95, I told my wife it would make a good Christmas gift.

Once I started using my new gauge, I knew I'd never go back to the old style. It gives instant readings and they're right on (I checked against my old gauge).

The only drawback to the gauge is that it's battery-powered and when the battery wears out (they say 10 years), you have to throw



the gauge away. No way to replace the battery. Also, when the temperature changes drastically - say from the middle of winter to springtime - you need to recalibrate the unit. But that's simply a matter of taking a reading and waiting 15 seconds before using it.

You can find the gauge at any Radio Shack store or call 800 442-7221; Website is www.radioshack.com.

Mark Newhall, Editor

sent the tools back to the company and asked for replacements. I also told them about some significantly dangerous manufacturing defects that I had noticed in the tools so they could correct them for future buyers. The company never replied, so I wrote them a letter asking about the status of the returned items. They sent back a form letter that told me to call their customer service department. I called them and was told that all customer service representatives were busy. I waited more than 40 minutes before I became

impatient and finally hung up. I sent three more letters to them but never got a written response. I was always referred by form letter to their customer service department.

"After writing four letters and spending a total of more than 2 1/2 hours on the phone waiting to talk to someone, I finally got through. The person I talked to said they couldn't find the tools I had returned. The entire experience was an exercise in frustration."

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