

## Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

problem from recurring is to burn premium gas in the engine and always use Seafoam or Stabil in the tank. I've done that the past few years and have had no more problems. So the HydroTek washer remains one of my best buys."

**G. Franklin Donk, Clyde, N.Y.:** "My 2017 Chevrolet Silverado LT pickup rides nice and is fuel efficient. It uses only about a pint of oil every 5,000 miles and has required only routine maintenance."

**Ronald Lock, Vanceburg, Ky.:** Ronald nominates the **Hitachi** cordless drill he bought at Lowes as his "worst buy." "The batteries don't stay charged, and the high-low speed switch accidentally shifts to neutral when using the drill. I hadn't used this drill much when the problems began. I got no help from Lowes and was told the drill was out of stock so I bought a new **Milwaukee** drill-driver set, which I like."

**John Ross, Hansville, Wash.:** "It's the best gopher trap I've ever used, and I've tried them all," says John about his **Gopher Hawk** mole trap ([www.gopherhawk.com](http://www.gopherhawk.com); ph 805 486-8225). "This trap allows you to catch gophers from above ground without ever having to dig out the tunnels. I've caught more than 30 gophers in just 2 years and have recommended the trap to many others. Everyone loves it."

**Walter Buck, Ringgold, Ga.:** "I repowered my 1950 **Oliver** tractor with a Cummins diesel engine that delivers smooth, clean power."

**Mark A. Justice, Humboldt, Tenn.:** "I like my **LockNLube** grease gun coupler ([www.locknlube.com](http://www.locknlube.com); ph 603 795-2298). It fits onto most standard grease guns and comes with a sliding sleeve that's activated by a thumb lever. Four spring-steel jaws lock onto the grease zerk, creating a leak-proof seal. Activating the trigger releases the coupler from the zerk. Excellent customer service."

**John Hillhouse, Birmingham, Ala.:** John's impressed with the **Transdenser II** electronic ignition he installed last December in his 2 **Graveley** walk-behind tractors. "I've owned these tractors, which are equipped with Kohler K series engines, for about 30 years. They're fine machines but I always had trouble starting them due to problems with the ignition points and condenser. But now both tractors start right up."

"The Transdenser II replaces the engine's original condenser, installing into the original condenser clamp. It delivers greater energy to the spark plug, which results in a huge spark that looks almost like a blue flame." (Editor's note: See our story on this product on p. 34)

**J.R. Holt, Cincinnati, Ohio:** J.R.'s impressed with his 2018 **Chevrolet Bolt**. "I had been following updates on Motor Trend's 2017 car of the year and asked my dealer to bring me a car for a test drive as soon as one came in. I almost didn't go to bed the night he dropped the car off. It's really spunky. It can go 0 to 60 mph in 6 seconds or less, and during 80-degree weather it gets up to 260 miles per charge; in winter, about 205 miles.

"We drive this car mainly around the greater Cincinnati area and use a portable 110-volt charger on it. So far we haven't noticed any increase in our electric bills, which was also true with the 2012 Chevrolet Volt we previously owned."

"The Bolt is a shorter car than the Volt, yet it's much easier to get in and out of. Its total weight is about the same - roughly 3,500 lbs. The hard-to-find Tesla 3 electric car rarely sells without expensive options that increase its price by thousands of dollars. The Bolt is well equipped at \$38,000."

**Joe Payne, Hardinsburg, Ky.:** Joe's impressed with **Never-Seez** anti-seize

lubricant ([www.neverseez.com](http://www.neverseez.com)). "I own a Farmall Cub and an International 184 lawn tractor equipped with a Cub engine. Both tractors were hard to start. Cub tractors use cast iron cylinder heads and the threads on the spark plugs had become rusty. As a result, the plugs weren't getting a good ground back to the cylinder head. I applied a coating of **Never-Seez** on the threads, and the problem was solved."



**Frankie Deters, Seneca, Kansas:** "No problems with my 1981 IH 5088 tractor equipped with a turbocharged diesel engine. It has a nice, quiet air-conditioned cab, plenty of fuel capacity, and a lot of hydraulic power. It runs cool, as the forward air flow radiator fan on the tractor pulls hot engine heat away from the cab during the summer. This tractor has a big 2-filter air cleaner, a comfortable cloth seat, and an easy-to-shift transmission. It rides nice and provides a good view from the cab. It also looks nice when waxed up."

"I like my 1990 IH 4300 27-ft. field cultivator. The self-leveling mechanism on it works good and it has a lot of grease zerk, even on the wheel hubs. It also has a nice, durable paint job."

**Paul Kochich, Greene, N.Y.:** "I own a **Snapper** 550Z zero-turn riding mower. I noticed that 3 of the 4 engine mounting bolts on it had snapped off, and the fourth one was loose due to vibration. The mower has only about 250 hrs. on it. I had to remove the engine in order to drill out the broken bolts. Otherwise the mower works good."

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**Adrian Flath, Evans Mills, N.Y.:** "The **Takeuchi** CL 140 track skid loader that I bought used is a great machine ([www.takeuchi-us.com/skid-steers/](http://www.takeuchi-us.com/skid-steers/)). I really like that the front door window rolls overhead, which is a great idea which is a great idea because the operator can't get trapped in the event of an accident. I'll definitely buy other Takeuchi equipment."

**Clark C. Phillips, North Collins, N.Y.:** "I bought a used 2014 **Kia Soul** compact luxury crossover SUV with about 9,000 miles on it, and it now has about 62,000 miles. All I've replaced are 2 tires and the front brakes. It gets about 30 mpg. This SUV rides nice, is easy to get in and out of, and has a distinctive look that makes it easy to find in a crowded parking lot."

**William Sanford, Roxboro, N.C.:** "I like my 2016 **Stihl** Weedeater. I've used Stihl weedeaters and blowers for many years and they've all performed well."

"We had several problems with our 2015 **Frigidaire** side-by-side refrigerator equipped with a bottom freezer. The freezer would stop working for no reason, causing all the food inside it to thaw. Then the icemaker quit working. We contacted the company but it took 2 weeks to schedule repairs, and then the service tech couldn't find the problem. They made 3 more service calls with no results."

"I asked for a replacement model but was just told to schedule another service call. Instead, I went back to the Lowes store where

**Eric Vimont, Mount Vernon, Mo.:** "If it weren't for **Joel Salatin** ([www.polyfacefarms.com](http://www.polyfacefarms.com)), I'd be working in town. Thanks to him, my family and I are making a living on less than 70 acres. We produce raw milk and market it locally following Salatin's model of holistic management and relationship marketing to consumers and restaurants."

"In his writing and in his speeches, he emphasizes getting rid of the middle man and selling direct to the end users. That's what we do on our farm, and we are selling our milk for \$10 per gallon while conventional milk goes for \$1 per gallon."

"Using Salatin's ideas, we started out selling at a farmer's market. We also followed his belief that quality must always improve. It is why we just bought a new chilling tank. It gets the fresh milk down to 37 degrees within 30 min. of milking. Then the milk is kept refrigerated until it is delivered."

"As we built our customer base, we were able to move away from the farmer's market. A lot of our new business today is by word of mouth. If someone drinks our milk, they are hooked. They tell us they won't drink milk if they can't get ours. They are vocal about it to others, too."

"As Salatin also recommends, we are diversified, selling beef and lamb, as well as milk. If we have more milk than customers, the excess goes to our calves. This allows us to raise better heifers and bigger beef, which we sell to end users as well."

"We also market lamb. Everything is



Bottling milk for customers is just one of the chores Eric Vimont and his wife perform on their small, diversified farm. They sell direct to customers.

processed at a USDA inspected plant, so we can sell by the piece as well as by bulk.

"We do a lot of cross selling as milk customers pick up meat from our freezers when they pick up their milk."

"We are open to customer inspection anytime, 6 days a week. That's the best way for customers to be sure our products are up to their standards."

"If you want to do what we do, just do it. We need more small farms, not more big ones."

"The rules we follow include: debt is the enemy; love what you do if you want customers to appreciate it; and be open and transparent to your customers."

"We've worked with both **Joel Salatin** and **Charlotte Smith** (Vol. 42, No. 4). She is really good, and he is amazing. They can help."

I bought the refrigerator. To his credit the manager offered a refund and a new, more expensive refrigerator of my choice as a replacement. However, one month later the ice maker on that model failed, too. After another service call and the installation of a new ice maker, I finally have a working refrigerator."

**James Jicha, Streetsboro, Ohio:** A 2017 **Kubota** Commander series zero-turn riding mower equipped with a 54-in. deck and Kawasaki engine rates as James's "best buy." "For 40 years I used garden tractors to mow my more than 2 acres of lawn, but this zero-turn model has reduced my mowing time by half. The ease of mowing and trimming with it is extraordinary. It's easy to get on and off and has a comfortable seat."

"We use our 2008 **EZ-Go** gas-powered golf cart for hauling stuff and for pleasure. Very dependable."

"I used my **Ryobi** sawzall moderately over a 3-year period, but even so it quit working after the warranty expired. Now I use only **DeWalt** tools."

**Gary F. Thomsen, Arion, Iowa:** "It's an awesome tool," says Gary about his 2017 **OMETOOLS** 1/2-in. heavy-duty cordless impact wrench (sold on Amazon). "I was a little skeptical when I bought it because it only cost about \$80, and I've had bad experiences with other 'off brands' in the past. But I was impressed the first time I used it. I put a socket on the wrench and put it on a lug nut, then touched the trigger, and the next thing I knew I was watching the lug nut go bouncing across the floor. I have a bad back, so I really appreciate not having to fight with a lug wrench."

On the negative side, he lists his 2016 **MTD** 20-in. push mower equipped with a 300 series Briggs & Stratton engine. "It's always a guessing game whether this mower will start or not. Last spring the starter rope on it broke on the first pull. That's when I realized the mower's starting mechanism is pop riveted to the engine housing. After drilling out the rivets I discovered the

assembly isn't repairable, so there's no way to install a new rope. Luckily there was still enough rope left to attach the handle and start the engine, but now every time I try to start the mower I have to use a clamp to hold down the safety bar. I've inspected this mower closely but nowhere on it does it say 'Made in China'."

**Paul J. Norfleet, McEwen, Tenn.:** "My 2014 **Cub Cadet** STX zero-turn riding mower equipped with a Kohler engine has 500 trouble-free hrs. on it."

**Bernis Ingvaldson, Bagley, Minn.:** "The **Atrax Electric 4** olive harvester featured in FARM SHOW (Vol. 41, No. 3) isn't just for olives. We've used it on everything from



haskaps and Juneberries to tart cherries, currants and gooseberries.

"The gooseberries were the clincher - no more prickles from their thorns. That made it worth the \$1,100 price tag."

"In addition to our pick-your-own and nursery stock sales at our farm ([www.honeyberryusa.com](http://www.honeyberryusa.com)) we also offer picked fruit. Picking is labor intensive, and we've tried everything from hand-slapping branches to homemade shakers using pvc pipe and a multi-fingered wand on a battery-powered jig saw. Ontario grower Manuel Gosselin of Indigo Super Tech provides how-to instructions for one on his Facebook page (<https://bit.ly/2wa07PI>).

"We wanted something more ergonomic and efficient. The Atrax Electric 4 is lightweight with fingers on the end that tickle the berries off."

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