

# Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys



**Gary Meeks, Verona, Va.:** “The **Mahoning** outdoor furnace on my farm is a real money-maker. For 23 years now, it’s earned me \$3,000 to \$6,000 per year in heat savings. Because of the furnace, I actually get paid to clean up fallen wood around my farm. The furnace has a heavy-duty shaker grate and a forge-type air blaster under the grate along with a spark arrester on the smoke outlet pipe, which needs to be cleaned periodically. So, I put ladders on both sides to climb up to wire brush soot out of the screen. With two ladders, I can choose the upwind side so soot doesn’t blow on me. I’ve found that rubber dairy cow mats work well around the furnace to stop weeds and mud and prevent farm cats from using the area as a litter box. Best of all, if I’m cutting up wood on one of the mats, a mistake will not damage the chainsaw.”

**Travis Harrison, Wayne, Ohio:** “My best buy is our **Tree Buster** tree saw manufactured by **Herr Mfg.**, Abilene, Kan. (ph 785-263-6224). It does a great job cutting trees flush with the ground. I simply attach it to my skid loader, and it’ll take down a good-sized tree in less than a minute. No stump to remove or grind. You can mow right over the cut.”

**Al Brown, Wyanet, Ill.:** “Because my ancient Lincoln ‘buzz box’ stick welder never failed me, I bought a **Lincoln Easy Mig 140** welder in 2015. Near the end of the 3-year warranty, the wire feed would randomly quit. By the time the warranty expired, it was completely unreliable. An official service center located an hour away kept it for 10 days. They told me it works fine and charged me \$100. Back home it didn’t work, so I took it apart myself and originally found if I plug and unplug the big multi-pin connector inside, it will usually work. I couldn’t find any fault with the connector or connections. I put a hinge on the side door for easy access to the plug. It welds fine, but it’s unreliable and annoying. Maybe I got a lemon, but this welder’s replacement will not be a Lincoln.”

**Ron Lansink, Lansink Repair & Hardware, Danbury, Iowa:** “I ordered a tractor cab interior kit from **Shoup Mfg.** When it came, the foam backing on the vinyl was deteriorated and falling apart. I contacted Shoup, and they said all they could do was sell me another kit at their cost. I said ‘no’ because I couldn’t charge my customer for two kits. They should’ve replaced it at no charge. Why would I buy another?”

Also on the negative side, “I bought a hydrogen generator from **Andrew Herrold** for my diesel motorhome. I did everything he said to do to adapt it to my engine but never saw any improvement in mileage. I spent a lot of time and money on this when I should have just used the money to buy diesel fuel.

I was told to send the unit back and I’d get a refund. I sent the unit back but didn’t get my money back.”

**Loran Ellingson, Park River, N.D.:** “I bought a 2016 **Chevrolet Silverado 1500** work truck. I bought it in 2018 from a guy who buys a new pickup every 2 years. It’s a basic, reasonably-priced pickup that has performed great. It has a 4.3L V-6 engine, bright red standard cab with an 8-ft. box, manual windows, rubber floor, and black painted bumpers. The only problems I’ve had are installing a new starter and a defective spare tire carrier. This is my third Silverado, and it’s the best.”



**Dr. Annette Davis, Trotwood, Ohio:** “I really like my **Stihl GTA 26** mini chainsaw. I call it the ‘housewife’ model because I’m 63 and have bum shoulders. It’s very light and can be used with one hand. There’s a guard on top to prevent kickback injury. It’s also very easy to clean.”



“My second best buy is a **Gomboy** foldable pruning saw. It’s super sharp and cuts on the pull stroke. It’s the best hand saw I’ve ever used.”



“My third best buy is my set of **Leatherman Raptor** bandage scissors available on Amazon. They’re foldable, compact and very heavy-duty. I carry them in the car in case of emergency, but I use them for all kinds of things around the house. They’ll cut through anything.”

**Lowell G. Brown, Unionville, Mo.:** “In a recent issue, there was an article on a BL 54 bale loader built by **Snow-Co**. It mounts



Drones can be used to find and train birds, take aerial photos of land and equipment, and give a broad view of pasture quality or even track algae growth in a pond.

## Drone Best Buy

**Brad Wood, Greens Fork, Ind.:** “My **Mavic Air 2** is a pretty well-rounded drone. I could do commercial work with it, but that would require a drone license. So far, I just use it around my farm, so all I had to do was register it with the FAA.

“I raise sheep and poultry on pasture with Peterson-style chicken tractors. A recent discussion on the APPPA forum centered on the use of drones. Some members found their birds ran when a drone was flown overhead, thinking it was a predator bird. One member used a drone to train birds to seek cover.

“I’ve used my drone to get aerial photos of my sheep and the chicken tractors for use on my social media, but not to check on the birds.

“Aerial pictures of the pastures provide a snapshot of pasture quality. I can see the distribution of manure from the chicken tractors in the patterns in vegetation and compare how the pastures are doing over time.

“My main use of the drone has been to document infrastructure improvements to the farm and to maintain a visual record of the homestead. I’ve even used it to track algae growth in the pond.

“When planning a new fence, I overlaid my photos with Google Earth images for planning purposes.

“I use **Dronelink** software ([www.dronelink.com](http://www.dronelink.com)). You don’t need it to simply fly a drone. However, it lets me produce a flight plan the drone will follow repeatedly. It ensures the drone will take pictures from the same location, height and direction every time the flight plan is activated. It provides consistency, and the software will adapt the flight plan to a new drone if I replace the one I have.

“I also have **Maps Made Easy** software ([www.mapsmadeeasy.com](http://www.mapsmadeeasy.com)). It stitches pictures together. This makes it easier to see changes over time.”

alongside a bale wagon and picks bales up one at a time, then drops them on the wagon. When I used one, I put sideboards on the wagon so I could load about 30 bales at a time by myself without getting off the tractor seat.”

**Steven Kass, Hallstead, Penn.:** “**Voltman Batteries** rebuilds nearly all NiCad batteries ([www.voltman-batteries.com](http://www.voltman-batteries.com)). I was able to have my 18-volt DeWalt batteries rebuilt for \$60, allowing me to keep my 18 DeWalt tools running. I’ve used the batteries for a year and a half now, and they’re still fine. New batteries from DeWalt would have been \$230 each.”

Also on the positive side, “I bought a 12-volt battery charger/maintainer/desulfator from **Northern Tool** – Model #12117TC. It worked so well that I bought several. It brought back batteries that wouldn’t hold a charge, and several years later, they’re still in service. It won’t overcharge, so I put them on in the fall and remove them in the spring. I’ve got a 13-year-old battery that’s still going strong.”

**Steve Stewart, Spokane, Mo.:** “I like the Bauer line of cordless tools at **Harbor Freight**, everything from drills to hedge trimmers. I have a 12,000-lb. excavator with two 3/4-in. bolts that hold the tilt on the cab down. I ran the bolts down with my 1/4-in. Bauer impact driver and then checked them with an 18-in. breaker bar, and they were plenty tight. I keep a drill in every truck.”

**Brian Zumbach, Henderson, N.Y.:** Brian’s pleased with his **Harbor Freight** Daytona 3-ton super-duty floor jack. “I use it almost daily, and it’s very well built, especially considering the very affordable price tag.”

On the negative side, “My 2014 **Kubota 1140 RTV** has spent more time waiting to be repaired than being driven. We’ve had to rebuild both the front and rear ends, and it’s currently waiting for another front-end rebuild.”

**Jerry Trochinski, Ripon, Wis.:** “I bought my farm after the passing of my parents. Included in the purchase was Dad’s 1947 8N Ford that he bought new. He’d kept the original purchase documents, which showed the upcharge for lights and a swing drawbar as well as a 2-bottom plow and a cultivator. My dad bought it soon after returning home from WWII while recovering from being blown up in his tank during the Battle of the Bulge. He also landed on Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944. He put in his tractor order soon after arriving home.

“The tractor starts well in below-zero Wisconsin weather, even without following the original manual’s suggestion to thin out the oil with gasoline, which it said would evaporate once the tractor warmed up. Replacement parts are readily available, and most maintenance requires only the four wrenches that came with the tractor.”

**Murray Kasun, Leask, Sask.:** “My best buys are **Ridgid** cordless power tools. Ridgid has a lifetime warranty for the original purchaser, including the batteries. They have a full range of cordless tools that work great and are reasonably priced compared to Milwaukee and Makita. I’ve dropped tools off the roof and have used tools very hard in emergencies causing smoke to come out of the tool, and the company repaired or replaced them under warranty, no questions asked.”