

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

Roger Kahler, Dunnell, Minn.: "FARM SHOW is the best—keep it up. A protective plastic sleeve would help protect it during mailing. Please keep the paper in print; I can resume reading an article anywhere."

Editor's Note: We have considered a plastic sleeve in the past, but the cost is too high for our non-advertising format. We do offer a special handling option that ships in an envelope for an additional charge.

Jack Griffith, Venus, Texas: "I have five Craftsman cordless tools, including a set of pruners like the one a reader recommended in Vol. 49, No. 4. I chose Craftsman because I didn't want a bunch of different chargers and batteries that don't interchange. My son needed pruning shears, and I was tempted to buy the ones a reader wrote about in Vol. 49, No. 5. When I checked Amazon, the price had dropped to \$75, but several other pruners were listed for \$35."

Thurman Vangen, Ferryville, Wis.: Thurman's had good luck with his Milwaukee M18 cordless drill (model 2804-20). "I replaced some deck boards on my patio and drove 498 3 1/2-in. screws with one battery charge. I have 11 other M18 tools (impacts, saws, inflators and grinders). They're a bit more expensive and heavier, but they always work, which is why I keep buying them."

"Unfortunately, I made the mistake of buying a Harbor Freight Bauer 20V angle grinder. It's a brushless model with electronic controls. If I apply any pressure, it stops running. I have to release the trigger, count to two, and it starts again. It does this consistently. I do repair work, so it's basically unusable."

Eddie Lehmann, Bynum, Texas: "I've had many Ford pickups over 60 years. I drove a 2002 F-250 SuperCab with a 5.4 engine and an automatic transmission. In 175,000 miles, I never touched the engine or transmission. Both were dry with no leaks. I sold it in 2024. It now has over 300,000 miles and is still going. People tell me this is unreal. I still drive Fords. Treat them like a good woman, and they'll stay by your side."

"FARM SHOW's 'Best, Worst Buys' section is a best buy. I've avoided some bad buys and found some good ones by reading it."

"Mahindra tractors have been good buys. I bought my first in 2002 and now own two. With regular service, they keep going."

"I've been using Miller portable welders for 50 years. I went to them because Lincoln didn't have AC for hand tools."

"On the negative side, anything I've ordered off Facebook has been junk, or I never received it, even though my credit card was charged. There's no way to contact them."

"I bought a hydraulic and cable lift for a pickup or trailer bed from Northern Tool. I didn't open the box for a year. When I went to assemble it, the packaging didn't include a base section. I went back to Northern Tool, and the manager told me they had stopped carrying those. They wouldn't give me my money back even though I had my receipt. I tell everybody to beware of Northern Tool."

Charlie Mozisek, Inez, Texas: "I have several items I could nominate as best buys. These are the standouts: Echo chainsaws, weed eater, blower and pole saw; Ridgid drill and driver (both came with a lifetime warranty); Kubota L3010 tractor with loader and RTV400 ATV; and my 2004 Chevy 2500 pickup."

"My worst buy list starts with a Westinghouse 2000 inverter generator that leaked more oil than all my past vehicles combined."

"I had a Troy-Bilt 4-cycle mini cultivator

that never ran for more than 15 min. The recoil starter engaged only when it wanted to.

"Finally, I was disappointed with DeWalt 3-speed drills and their batteries, which don't last."

Leighton Carow, Edgeley, N.D.: "My best buy is my Gravely lawn mower. It has 450 hrs. I change the oil and air filters and sharpen or replace the blades as needed. It's a great mower."



Andrew Jossund, Hendrum, Minn.: "My jack stands and splitting stands from Charlie's Repair in Austin, Minn., have proven to be best buys (www.charliesrepair.com; ph 507-438-7172). The construction and finish are top-notch."

"We've used the splitting stands while working on tractors. The jack stands are adjustable with pins and multiple holes. They safely support equipment and extend the range of a bottle jack. We pin them up and block the jack using the solid metal base."

"It's always a challenge to block up jacks in the field to lift equipment without the jack sinking, becoming crooked, or becoming unsafe. With its large base, the stands distribute the weight without tipping or sinking."

"We keep a set in our service truck at all times. They're great products made right here in Minnesota."



Roger Gutschmidt, Gackle, N.D.: "I just finished repairing an Ice Castle fish house, and in my mind, it's a worst buy. A cable winch on each wheel mechanism raises and lowers the house, but the owner said the winch mechanism on one side didn't work. Before he had it, it served as a warming house on a construction site."

"If I'd known what I was getting into, I'm not sure I would've taken on the job. When I set it up on blocks and removed the wheel, I could see the problem. The wheel mechanisms were designed to pivot on 2-in. shafts welded through and to the ice house frame. On the problem side, the shaft had ripped right off the frame."

"It ripped free because the shaft had rusted solid to the pivot point on the wheel mechanism arm. When the owner attempted to lower the wheel, the winch ripped the shaft out and even broke the reinforcement gusset on the other side of the frame. The 1/8-in. steel tubing simply wasn't strong enough to hold it."



Ruen using his snow rake to clear solar panels.

Snow Rake Is Gentle On Solar Panels

Jim Ruen, La Crescent, Minn.: "I highly recommend snow rakes with a Snow Pro head if you have solar panels. The polyethylene foam face safely removes snow without scratching. The Snow Pro head is available on a wide range of poles. We bought ours from RoofRake.com (www.roofrake.com; ph 248-802-2455)."

"Having a snow rake just makes sense. We installed enough solar panels to generate the electricity we use in a year. With Minnesota's NetZero pricing, our co-op sends us a check when we produce more than we use. However, that investment doesn't pay off if sunlight doesn't hit the panels."

"Our snow rake is a 22-ft. aluminum pole with internal locks for adjustable length and a nylon tip. It's lightweight and easy to control, even at its maximum length."

"We have a traditional snow rake we use to prevent ice dams and remove deep snow buildup from roof edges. However, the rake's metal face isn't designed for use on solar panels."



Gentle surface of snow rake is suitable for glass.

"According to the company, the snow rakes are also recommended for use on shingles, awnings and vehicles. They're certainly gentle enough for all of the above."

"One good indicator that a product works is that in early February, most models with a Snow Pro head were sold out. RoofRake sells snow rakes from three different companies. They also offer an alternative to the Snow Pro, the Roof Brum. It retails for \$36.95 for the head only, compared with \$31.95 for the Snow Pro, head only."



"I cut the shaft off at the frame with a Sawzall to free the pivot point arm so I could work on it. I couldn't use a press to push the shaft out because the pipe housing at the pivot point arm was too weak. It took repeated heating of the shaft housing with a torch for short periods of time and lots of penetrating oil to pound out the shaft. I couldn't heat it too much or the shaft would expand."

"Once it was out, I used 4-in. long, 1/4-in. thick flat iron to reinforce the frame the new shaft would be welded to. Given the proximity to the wooden floor of the icehouse, I punched five 3/4-in. holes along the top edge for welds, then did the bottom with regular welds."

"I replaced the 2-in. shaft with a 1 3/4-in. shaft and slipped brass bushings with that inside diameter and a 2-in. outside diameter into each side of the pivot point. I tapped holes for grease zerks in the bushings and drilled access holes in the pivot point arm so the shaft could be lubricated. It was steel-on-steel that caused the problem."

"With the new shaft and bushings in place, I reinstalled the wheel mechanism and the wheel. Everything worked fine because the winch and wheel mechanism were well-engineered. The frame tubing, however, was just too weak."

Submit A "Best or Worst Buy"

To submit a "Best or Worst Buy," or other information, send a note along with photos and literature, if available. We'll get back to you later if we need more details. Send to: Editor, FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 800-834-9665; fax 952-469-5575; editor@farmshow.com). You can also submit information at our website: www.farmshow.com or text from your cellphone to: 952-465-5019.