ASK THE FARMER WHO OWNS ONE

"Owner's Report" On Best, Worst Balers

Are you satisfied with your baler? How could it be improved? Have you modified your baler in any way? What equipment do you use to transport bales?

These are a few of the questions we asked randomly-selected baler owners in an effort to highlight those balers that perform with flying colors and to pinpoint those "lemons" that fail because of poor performance - or failure of the dealer or company to provide service.

Here's how the survey shaped up:

G.W. Lancaster, Goodview, Va.: "The pto driveline is so heavy it takes two men and a monkey to hook it up to a tractor," G.W. says about his 1991 **Deere** 435 round baler. "Another problem is that it's built so tall it's top-heavy. Also, grease fittings in the drive line constantly break."

Robert T. Hellyer, Lander, Wyo.: Simplicity is what Robert likes most about his two **OMC** 595 big round balers. "There are no belts and no electronics," he says. "I wish manufacturers would keep balers as simple as these. Forget all the automatic junk. They're easy to operate and prices would be lower if they were still built this way."

David Oester, Grantsville, Md.: David's the satisfied owner of a **Deere** 336 square baler and **Deere** 510 round baler. "The 336 is energy efficient and has good capacity," he says. "The 510 has three advantages over other balers of comparable age. One, it starts bales easily. Two, it can be stopped and started again with a bale in the chamber. Three, it makes tighter bales than a chain baler and they're smoother so they shed water well."

Richard D. Peden, North Manchester, Ind.: Richard's 1987 **New Holland** 316 small square baler could be improved. "It needs a better drive because we've broken yokes and a shaft. We run the slip clutch on the flywheel a little looser than recommended to alleviate problems."

Murray Caswell, Meaford, Ontario: With a few exceptions, Murray's well satisfied with his 1992 **Gehl** 1470 big round baler. "It makes firm bales that hold their shape even after being stored all winter. The total density control feature on the baler allows us to change density of the bale core so we can bale at various moisture levels. The bale discharge ramp works reasonably well so there's no need for an expensive bale kicker," he says. "They could improve this baler by adding more teeth to the pickup so it handles green, fresh-cut material better and by widening the pickup. The pickup could also use a flotation system and possibly wheels. Also, bearings on belt rollers could be bigger and heavier."

Harding M. Meacham, Franklin, Tenn.: "We love our 1995 **New Holland** 640 baler," says Harding. "It makes a consistently formed, tight 4 by 5-ft. bale that's easy to handle when laying them end-to-end. Bales are never over 8-ft. wide, which is important when hauling loads on public roads."

Jim Droscha, Charlotte, Mich.: Jim's 1994 **Gehl** 435 round baler is his fourth Gehl baler since 1986. Gehl makes excellent balers with good trade-in value," he notes.

John Voigt, Avon, S. Dak.: The "weak spot" in John's **New Idea** 546 big round baler is its pickup. "The drive belt is too small and slips easily on uneven ground," he says. "In large windrows, hay bunches up in front of the bale chamber and has to be pulled out by hand. These problems were corrected in the newer 486's."

John Gradel, Owego, N.Y.: John is pleased with both his 1993 **Deere** 440 small square baler and his 1990 **Deere** round baler. "The 400 makes a uniform bale in both length and density so they stack solidly," he says. "The round baler has large capacity and makes a solid bale that's tied well. It even works well in green hay for balage."

Earl Weinzimmer, Guernsey, Ohio: "I've spent less than $100 in repairs in eight years making 400 to 700 4 by 5-ft. round bales a year," says Earl about his 1987 **Krone** 151 baler. "It's a very simple machine that has fewer moving parts and was cheaper than most other balers. However, I wish they'd find a way to make it easier to replace teeth on the pickup."

Jon L. Becker, Cumberland, Wis.: "Extremely reliable" is how Jon describes his 1990 **Deere** 337 small square baler. "We've had no major problems in 50,000 bales," he says. "I only wish it had on-the-go tension settings."

Virgil Storm, Lucas, Iowa: "I've used **New Holland** big round balers for 16 years and have found them all to be good if not great," Virgil says. "However, the 1994 New Holland 660 I'm using now could use wider belts which would improve its ability to handle wet and tough hay that drops through spaces between belts and then wraps on rollers. This in turn fouls up the net wrapping system when wrapping bales."

Carroll Bantz, Rowley, Iowa: A 1980 **Massey-Ferguson** 124 rates as Carroll's "best buy." "It has a new-style Sure-Tie knotter that works flawlessly. I wore out five men and boys custom-baling one day. They wished something on the baler would break down so they could take a breather but nothing ever did."

Donald H. Krause, Broadview, Mont.: Donald reports only one problem with his 1987 **Deere** 330 round baler. Otherwise, he's "very satisfied". "When one of the side cylinders began to leak, we took it to our local Deere dealership and they told us there was no way to fix it, that we'd have to buy a whole new cylinder," he says. "I took it to a nearby hydraulics shop and they repaired it, no problem."

Rowan Camp, Russell, Kan.: "We bale 20,000 small square bales and 5,000 round bales a year and **Deere** makes the best baler on the market because there's less upkeep than on any other machine I know of," says Rowan about his Deere 347 square and 535 round balers.

"It makes good solid bales but side augers have a tendency to plug."

Leo D. Allison, Hartford, Ariz.: Leo's generally well-pleased with his 1994 **New Holland** 650 big round baler. "It makes good solid bales, but side augers have a tendency to plug," he says.

Kermit Miskell, Story City, Iowa: "My 1994 **Vermeer** 605 K net wrapper auto weave with kicker is an excellent machine. It operates fast and produces perfectly shaped, tightly wrapped bales," he says.

Dale Oldenberg, Medford, Wis.: Dale's mostly satisfied with his **Deere** 336 small square baler with No. 30 ejector. "But we've had problems with the knotter. The twine broke often," he says. "We switched to heavier plastic twine which reduced the problem to only two or three broken bales per day."

Brent Guhle, Daysland, Alberta: "It ties just about every time and picks up swaths great," says Brent about his 315 **New Holland** small square baler. "However, it needs a better slip clutch and prices could be more reasonable."

Marvin Kruschel, Tiger Lilly, Alberta: Marvin's **Deere** 513 round baler has "good capacity". But if straw is too dry the baler has a tendency to break it up into tiny pieces, he adds.

Lloyd Polzin, Cadott, Wis.: Lloyd's happy with his 1993 **New Holland** 570 just as it is. "I can't think of anything I'd do to improve it," he says.

James E. Whitehead, Bennett, Colo.: James' 1987 **Hesston** 4800 big square baler is his "best buy." "Since 1987, I've had only one broken knife arm and one chain. Otherwise, all it's required is routine maintenance," he says. "I only wish the pickup was wider, as it is on newer models."

David Disk, Mulberry, Tenn.: "If you can drive a tractor you can bale hay with it," says David about his 1988 **Krone** 151 round baler. "However, they should have made the chain that moves the twine across the bale easier to oil and clean. Also, they should have made teeth on the pickup easier to change."

Allan Foster, Mountain Grove, Mo.: Allan likes his 1990 **Vermeer** 504 big round baler. "It consistently makes tightly wrapped, uniform sized bales that all look the same when you line them up end-to-end. My dealership has provided excellent service," he says. "My only complaint is that the baler has sealed bearings that don't last long enough to suit me. I've had to replace four already."

David Eriksen, Kamiah, Idaho: "It's fast and it allows you to change bale density and size quickly and easily," says Dale about his 1994 **Deere** 435 big round baler. "There's one thing that needs improvement, however. It's impossible to pick up short material on the second cutting of grass hay. I have to use a square baler on that."

Doug Burker, Morgantown, Ind.: Doug's generally satisfied with his 1988 **Case-IH** 8420 round baler, but says there's room for improvement in a couple of areas. "Starting bales from hay with a little moisture in it is a problem," he says. "It causes drive chains on the starter roller to break and the baler plugs up. Unplugging it is next to impossible. It needs more aggressive belts to better grip hay and a better starter roller than the smooth-surfaced metal one used on this baler. A bale ejector for this model would also be nice."

Richard Klepack, Quincy, Mich.: "I use a 1970 **New Holland** Hayliner 268 to make 2,000 to 3,000 small square bales of hay straw and bean fodder a year. I have replaced only two pickup gauge wheels, one knotter spring, and one feeder finger since I've had it."

Robert C. Malcomnson, Davison, Mich.: "We always used New Holland 66's until we got our mid-1970's **New Holland** 275 small square baler a couple of years ago," says Robert. "The 275 is smooth and powerful and practically never misses tying a bale. They've equipped it with a nice wide tire on the heavy side, a maintenance-free plunger bearing, and a wheel lock to help switch it to the transport position. Still, it needs tougher feeding forks and a sturdier knotter arm."

Barry Strandberg, Willbrook, Sask.: Barry reports his 1987 **Gehl** 1310 round baler is "excellent and virtually trouble-free. However, the pickup could be wider or should come equipped with gathering wheels. Also, dry wheat straw has a tendency to get ground up so it has to be baled a bit tough."

Bobby Abernathy, Casa, Ark.: Bobby's pleased with the **Vermeer** 504C baler he bought new in 1978 and uses it to make about 500 bales a year. "In the entire time I've had it I've only burnt out three bearings," he says.

Alfred Bjorneskaret, St. Paul, Alberta: Alfred makes 3,000 to 3,500 4 by 5-ft. soft center bales every year using a 1985 **New Idea** 484 baler. "It's virtually trouble-free and will bale very dry hay and straw, no problem. All you have to do is simply use more twine to wrap the bales," he says. "However, I have broken two rollers. Rollers could be made of heavier material and shafts into them could be extended farther."

Larry Losing, Baker, Mont.: Larry had bad luck with a 1986 **Deere** 530 big round baler. "The pickup is built too light," Losing says. "Belts are constantly wearing out. The hitch is weak. The tying system places the string too close to the edge of the bale. When you bale long oats straw the twine pulls out of the tying arm. It won't bale short, dry wheat straw at all."

Dan Sorvelli, Clarendon, Pa.: "We make 10,000 to 12,000 bales a year with our 1987 **Deere** 336 baler and it hardly ever misses a knot. Last year, it only failed to tie five bales. Plus, I really like the bale thrower. It saves a lot of time," says Dan.

Sylvan Lodahl, Homestead, Mont.: "The two biggest problems with our **New Holland** 851 round baler are that the teeth on the pickup are too hard to replace. Also, belts should be heavier," he says. "These were also problems on the 595 **Owatonna** baler I had before."

"You can bale when alfalfa's tougher than you can with most balers."

Roger Guthmiller, Menno, S. Dak.: Roger's well pleased with his 1994 **Case-IH** 8480 baler that makes soft center round bales. "It makes a nice, uniform-sized bale and you can bale when the alfalfa's tougher than you can with most balers," he says.

Robert Harris, Leavenworth, Kan.: "It makes good, tight bales and it starts bales easily," says Robert about his 1981 **Hesston** 5580 big round baler. "I only wish it would handle wetter hay, which wraps around rollers too easily."

Tommy Hurt, Dunlap, Tenn.: Given its age, Tommy's 1950's vintage **Massey-Ferguson** 12 small square baler is surprisingly reliable. "It works well, with only a 2 percent failure rate in tying bales," he says. "Best of all, it's paid for."

Glen B. Massey, Berlin, Md.: "I hope I'm better satisfied with belts on the **New Holland** 644 round baler than I was with the apron chains on the 1985 **New Holland** 848 round baler I just traded for it," says Glen. "The problem was, the apron chains didn't wear evenly. One side would

"Super-Sized" Bonnet For Long Rows Of Bales

At 100 ft. long by 10 ft. wide, "Super Bonnets" made from 10 ml. black plastic are ideal for covering 20 5-ft. bales placed end-to-end in a row on the ground. You simply roll the bonnet out over the bales to cover tops and sides so ends of the inner bales are never exposed to the elements, then spike the cover to the bales.

Life expectancy is at least five years. Sells for $125 including S&H.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Slip-Ons/Bale Bonnets, 4988 U.S. Route 50, Bainbridge, Ohio 45612 (ph 800 231-4242 or 614 634-2539; fax 3049).