"Owners Report" On Best, Worst Combines

Are you satisfied with the performance of your combine? How could it be improved? Have you modified your combine in any way to improve it in terms of grain damage, field loss, plugging, handling, cab, controls, etc.?

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

Here's how the survey shaped up.

"It ground up corn real bad when we first got it and nothing we tried would solve the problem," Bill Staton, Sheridan, Mo., says about his 1986 German-built **Deere** 4425 combine. "We had other problems. After two days' use, the slip clutch on the upper feederhouse fell off. At 60 hours, the transmission went out and the machine was out of commission for 10 days. Then, at 95 hours, the plastic paddles on the clean grain return elevator started falling off so I drilled out all of the rivets and put small bolts and lock nuts on the paddles to keep them in place.

"After two years of complaining, Deere sent two rep's from Germany. They brought us a prototype 2-speed cylinder that reduced rpm's to around 200 from the 400 we had been running at. That solved the problem in corn.

"Incidentally, I wish Deere would bring back the 4420, one of the best combines I ever had. It was ideal for my 300-acre operation. I can't justify the $100,000 price tags on the big new combines."

• "It does an excellent job in soybeans and a good job in corn, but it is a high upkeep machine" says Steve Fienup, Shenandoah, Iowa, about his 1990 **New Holland** TR 86. "They need to reduce the number of grease fittings or make the existing ones easier to get at. The drive on my 4-row corn head is terrible. It eats four chains a year and it's hard to adjust the stripper plates. I don't like the tall unloading auger, either. Even with a 4-ft. flex spout, corn blows all over the place when you top off trucks or wagons in a wind. It also needs a better heater control for the cab."

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• James Stadtmueller, Monticello, Iowa, is generally well satisfied with his 1994 **Case-IH** 1666. "I think the Case-IH engineers are the greatest," says James. "Every year, they ask farmers what they can do to improve their equipment. For example, since I bought mine, they've increased the engine's power, equipped them with larger elevators, increased grain-cleaning area, and improved the fan so it moves a lot more air."

• "My **Deere** 9400 combine equipped with 693 cornhead and 920 platform is a 'best buy,'" reports Terry S. Darnell, Thorntown, Ind. "We purchased it new in 1994 and it's been a pleasure to operate."

• Marvin Ungs, New Vienna, Iowa, is generally pleased with his 1985 **Massey Ferguson** 550. "It could use more power like newer ones, but who can justify the prices they want for new? We only farm 250 acres."

• "I'd definitely buy another one," says Lawrence Robinson, Mechanicsville, Iowa, about his 1981 **Case-IH** 1420. "It's a low-maintenance machine, easy on fuel, and the engine is perfectly matched to the machine's capacity.

"The only thing I did to improve performance was to install poly snouts on the corn head." (Vande Weerd Combines Inc., 2553 320th St., Rock Valley, Iowa 51247; ph 800 831-4814).

• "It has nearly 5,000 hours on it and the engine and transmission still perform like new," says Steve Burke, Charlotte, Iowa, well pleased with his 1978 **Deere** 6600 SH with hydrostatic transmission.

• This was the first season Mike Knutson, Canby, Minn., used a 1981 **Case-IH** 1460 he purchased earlier this fall. "I'm impressed with the simplicity and ease of maintenance," he reports.

• "It worked fine until this year. Then it seemed I bought parts in the morning and would often have to get more in the afternoon," says Clark Morrison, Philip, S. Dak., about his 1980's **Deere** 7700. "It's just getting old. The new ones are nice, but who can justify the cost?"

• Donald MaCowan, Monticello, Ind., is generally pleased with his late 1970's **Deere** 8820. "It does a good job cleaning grain, has a lot of capacity and plenty of power, and is not bad on fuel. It's been a good dependable machine," says Donald. "However, it has two or three belts on one side. When the back belt breaks, you've got to take apart a lot of things to replace it."

• "It isn't a big machine but for someone with 100 plus acres like me, it can't be beat," says Edward F. Allen, Indiana, Pa., about his 1983 **Allis Chalmers** All-Crop. "I've used this combine every year for five years and I've only had to change one U-joint, sickle knives, and the elevator belt from canvas to rubber. The only other thing it needs is a serpentine belt on its rear paddles."

• Freddie E. Windsor, Cambridge, Md., reports his 1990 **Case-IH** 1680 remains virtually trouble and maintenance-free even after 1,800 hours. "The only thing that could be done to improve it is to find a way to let the operator know when the tank is full and an indicator to let him know when the tank discharge is engaged," Freddie says. "Otherwise, it works perfectly. I did put bigger tires, like the ones newer models are equipped with, on back."

• A 1995 **Case-IH** 2166 is the third Axial-Flow combine Jon K Eakins has owned. "Each one keeps getting better and I'll probably buy another when the time comes," he says. "I just wish they'd put a muffler on the engine and make the sieves and pan under the chopper easier to adjust.

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Self-Leveling System For Massey 760

"It's the only Massey 760 I know of that's ever been equipped with a self-leveling system and it cost only a fraction of the $40,000 to $50,000 that a commercial leveling kit costs," says Steve Bughi, Walla Walla, Wash., about the one-of-a-kind self-leveling system he built for his combine three years ago.

Bughi started with a used 1979 Massey 760 with 1,000 hours on it. He equipped it with a Peterson sieve to help reduce grain loss in his fields, some with as much as 30 percent slope.

He removed stops from the rear axle to increase oscillation from 15 to 25°.

He built a leveling frame for the front out of two 40-in. lengths of 18 by 8, 1/2-in. thick steel tubing. The tubes bolt to the axle flange on each side of the combine and extend out from its frame. A 9-in. dia. steel pin connects each piece of tubing to the axle flanges so they pivot horizontally.

He beefed up the frame to handle the increased stress of the system, which adds 5 ft. to the combine's overall width.

He mounted special-order hydraulic cylinders - 5 1/2-in. dia. with 3 1/2-in. dia. ram and 20-in. stroke - on brackets on each side of the combine to get drive wheels to extend and retract. They permit front wheels to move up and down 24 in. so the combine remains perfectly level on slopes of up to 23 percent and level enough on steeper slopes to prevent virtually any grain loss.

Bughi also built a self-leveling system for his 24-ft. Massey header.

He used a Massey elevator extension used in rice harvesting, and cut it in half lengthwise. He welded two 6 1/2-ft. dia., 3/8-in. thick semi circles to the front and back halves of the extension to keep material feeding evenly through the feederhouse's 5-ft. throat as it pivots on a 3 in. dia. pin, double-nutted on top of the feederhouse.

The system operates with two 2-in. dia. hydraulic cylinders plumbed together. The drive cylinder mounts on the swing frame on the left side of the combine, while the slave cylinder mounts on the right side of the feederhouse. "

To keep the header rotating as it pivots a maximum of 24 in., same as the header, he made a telescoping driveline from a 1-in. sq. solid shaft inside a 1 1/4-in. sq. hollow shaft. It runs from the feederhouse out to the header.

For safety, all hydraulic cylinders are equipped with load check locks to hold them in place in case a hose breaks, Bughi notes.

Bughi says his system can be used on 750, 760, 850 and 860 Masseys as well as new ones, which use the same final drives.

Out-of-pocket expense was $19,000, including $9,000 for the combine.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Steve Bughi, Rt. 2, Box 252, Walla Walla, Wash. 99362 (ph 509 525-6827).

"Corn Shields" Save 3 to 5 Bu. Per Acre

Crop dividers are wedge-shaped attachments that mount on outer snouts of a corn head to keep cobs from bouncing out the sides of the header. Inventor Herald Barton says the patented shields can easily save 3 to 5 bu. of corn per acre depending on conditions.

Since FARM SHOW first reported on the shields a year ago (Vol. 19, No. 6), Barton has found a manufacturer to make his "Corn Shields" out of poly.

The shields install with just three or four bolts depending on make of combine.

They fit most Case/IH and Deere heads and sell for $129.95 a pair. (Models for new Deere poly heads as well as for other poly snouts will be available in 1997).

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Distel Grain Systems Inc., 624 Southside Dr., Box 108, LeSueur, Minn. 56058 (ph 800 426-1848 or 507 665-6776).