



One of Nelson's projects was this beat up 1958 Farmall. Photos below show tractor's console, before and after restoration. Finished tractor (bottom) was hardly recognizable.



When a customer brought in this 1935 Deere BN tractor, it consisted of the frame (above) and a pile of parts (left). When Nelson finished, it looked like new (below).



By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

“Better Than New” Tractor Restoration Expert

When Dave Nelson finishes with a tractor, it looks as good or better than when it came off the factory line. Tractors are completely disassembled to the last part, cleaned, painted and reassembled. Where necessary, parts are repaired or restored.

“Restoration is a term that is used loosely and often misunderstood,” says Nelson, owner of Agri-Crafts. “You shouldn’t call it restoration if you’re not completely thorough about it.”

Nelson cut his teeth working in high-end body repair on imported cars. In 1988, his grandfather asked him to paint a couple of older tractors he had collected. Nelson got the tractor bug after accompanying his grandfather to a few shows.

“The people we met were fantastic,” he recalls. “Within a year, I had 12 tractors in my collection. About 10 to 12 years ago, I took a sample of sheet metal work to a ‘Gathering of the Green’. I’ve been busy every since.”

Agri-Crafts has a national reputation for sheet metal restoration and fabrication for all types of antique tractors. Nelson employs a crew of 4, but relies on a much wider, nationwide network of people for parts.

“I’ve got my favorite guys for certain brands,” he explains. “There is a guy in Mississippi I’ll call for Massey parts. I send all my exhaust systems to K & A Coatings in

Minnesota. They do a sterling silver ceramic coat that will never rust off, never burn off and always looks like new.”

Nelson recognizes that others doing restoration may not follow his procedure. He and his crew take apart every component, carefully. Each component has its own table for breakdown, and each piece gets bagged and labeled so the original bolts and other parts are all returned to the original component.

“How much has to be done depends on the shape the tractor is in,” says Nelson. “If it is mechanically sound and only a few hours since it was last overhauled, we may simply disassemble, paint it and fix a few leaks.”

Other tractors may require a massive rework and cost thousands of dollars. The detailed process and results have produced a long list of satisfied customers and a waiting list that now stretches out 2 years.

“We’ve had customers from across the country,” says Nelson. “We’ve got 2 tractors on our waiting list from north of Alberta, and we just shipped a tractor, in parts, to a customer in Boston. We did all the restoration, but he wanted to reassemble it.”

Nelson notes that the types of tractors being restored are changing with a big swing to new generation muscle tractors. Ironically, parts are often harder to find than for older models. Restoration is more expensive also,

light years more, he says.

“The size, just in square inches, affects the cost of paint and time, plus there are often additional components not found on older tractors,” says Nelson. “We just finished our first big one, an Oliver 2255 with a Cat V-8 Diesel. It was the biggest row crop Oliver ever made. We have 4 more big ones on our waiting list.”

Nelson warns that such restorations, and even ones of older tractors needing a lot of work, can be costly. “A lot of tractors we do are not worth what has been invested in them, but people who’ve made the investment do it to keep them, not sell them,” he says. “In

fact, I only know of a couple I’ve restored that have been resold. The look on people’s faces when they pick up their tractors is the most rewarding part.”

Nelson admits that pricing a restoration can be difficult. One tractor can end up costing thousands of dollars more than a similar looking one. He suggests customers call him to discuss a possible project; simply understanding it won’t be done quickly.

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A Calf Monitor That Calls You

Your cow will call you when she’s ready to give birth with a new “Cow Call” device from Ireland that’s designed to be placed in the cow’s birth canal. The Cow Call has a phone inside that will inform you (and up to 4 others) via both text message and phone call when calving starts.

The small, compact, light sensitive device is placed in the cow up to 14 days prior to the projected calving date, and is ejected when the contractions start before calving. You’ll be alerted no matter where you are. The insertion process takes only 15 seconds.

The unit is connected to a base station on your farm. When the cow’s water breaks, the device is pushed out. Once outdoor light is detected, a message is immediately sent to the base station, where it’s analyzed.

The device automatically shuts down within 20 seconds after being passed out. The base station can monitor up to 60 cows at any one time. Inserts can be washed, sterilized and reused for up to 2 years.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup (ph 011 353 87 9066 479; info@cowcall.com; www.cowcall.com/pages/the-cow-call).