

(Continued from previous page)
 performed beyond my expectations," says Michael about his **Deere** 466 round baler. "I've used it to make almost 10,000 bales. The only repair it has needed was to a drive chain. The 4-ft. bale width allows us to move hay up narrow roads without posing a danger to oncoming traffic."

Thomas Stejskal, Lewis, Kansas: "I like the **Orthman** hydraulic drive on my Deere 7300 stackfold 12-row planter. The hydraulic drive is very accurate with no slippage, and it's easy to change the seed population. Virtually no problems.

"My 2003 **Dodge** Ram 1/2-ton pickup has been nothing but trouble. The front end won't hold together, the engine runs hot, and it's terribly fuel inefficient. For repairs, I have to take it to a Dodge dealer. It's the last Dodge pickup I'll ever buy."

John Jacobs, Hamler, Ohio: John's impressed with his **Mirafount** hog waterers. "We've had Mirafount waterers on our farm for almost 10 years and recently bought four more. They hold up well and work in all weather. My only complaint is with the underground shut-off valves, which are built cheap.

"My mother's **Husqvarna** 2448 lawn mower is a worst buy. At 30 hours the welds on the deck broke and ruined the belt. Fortunately, the mower was still under warranty. However, we had to make a number of phone calls and wait about a month before a service man finally came out with a new deck."

John Chestnut, Wernersville, Penn.: "FARM SHOW is my best buy. It's pleasing to know there are so many people out there who are doers and thinkers. Many, many ideas in your magazine have helped me with my own tinkering. Bless everyone who contributes.

"My 1999 **Dodge** 2500 pickup is my worst buy. I bought this pickup new and have kept up a routine maintenance schedule. At about 35,000 miles this pickup started having problems with the ball joints, transmission, rust, etc. I wanted a good, strong truck that I could count on for a long time. Obviously, I bought the wrong model."

John Vincent, Albany, Ind.: "My best buy **Deere** 770 utility tractor has more than 1,000 hours of trouble-free service. I use it for pushing snow and also to pull a 5-ft. Bush Hog mower, which it handles with ease. It uses about one gallon of fuel per hour at full throttle.

"My **Simplicity** ZT-16 ZTR riding mower is my worst buy. It has an excellent Kohler engine but is hard on drive belts, going through up to six belts in a single season. And, it takes me up to two hours to replace a belt. The dealer can't seem to solve the problem so this mower spends a great deal of time either in my barn or at the dealers."

Bill Albert, Smithboro, Ill.: "It has more than 100,000 trouble-free miles on it. Yet it still runs and drives like new," says Bill, pleased with his 1999 **Ford** F-250 pickup equipped with a diesel engine.

Stuart Childers, Fredricktown, Ohio: Stuart's the proud owner of a 2002 **Chevrolet** 1500 pickup. "Before I changed jobs I drove 165 miles round trip to work so I put a lot of miles on it, but all I've had to do is change oil and put on new tires. It now has more than 70,000 miles on it.

"Our 2004 **Deere** 5420 is a great utility tractor. It has a really nice balance between power and size."

Dave Winkle, Granville, Ohio: "My 2005 **Honda** Odyssey EXL minivan is our best buy. When we bought it my wife talked me into getting a car-based navigation system. This is our first experience with a navigation system, and we love it. It's very user friendly

and has kept us from getting lost on numerous occasions. The van rides and handles like a car and is fuel efficient, as the engine switches from six cylinders to three cylinders during steady driving.

"My **Generac** generator is a best buy. We have a lot of power outages in our rural area, and after being without electricity for five days during the 2004 Christmas holidays, we knew we had to buy a larger generator with 240-volt capacity so we could at least operate our well pump. So far have been well pleased with it. It has electric start and a low oil sensor, and it will idle down whenever it's not under load. It generates 7,500 watts and has a surge capacity of 13,500 watts. Several weeks ago our power was off for 21 hours but we were still able to power the well pump, a freezer, two refrigerators, TV, lights, and barn fans with no problem."

On the negative side, "By far the worst buy we've ever made is our **Water Furnace** geothermal heating and cooling system (www.WaterFurnace.com). We built our house in 1987 and installed a York heat pump with a propane furnace for backup. The system was set to turn the heat pump off and the propane furnace on whenever the outside

"Our power was off for 21 hours but we were still able to power the well pump, a freezer, two refrigerators, TV, lights, and barn fans."

temperature dropped below 30 degrees. This system operated flawlessly for 15 years, with only one minor service call for the heat pump.

"During the summer of 2002 we decided the heat pump was probably nearing the end of its life cycle and, with propane costs rising each year, we wanted a lower cost system. We did a lot of research and decided to purchase this company's premier 3-ton geothermal heating and cooling system. We kept our propane furnace for emergency backup and were assured by the dealer that it would rarely if ever be needed. During the first winter, the new geothermal system couldn't heat the house and we used over 200 gallons of propane. The company said the underground loop just needed time to settle in. But the next winter the problem got even worse. I contacted the company again, was given the run-around, and finally told to work with the dealer to solve the problem. Not very good customer support.

"This summer has been warmer than the previous two, and the system runs in A/C mode all day long just to keep the house at 73 degrees. To add insult to injury, this system has required three service calls (due to a defective loop pump, defective capacitor, and defective circuit board) since it was installed. In hindsight we would have saved a lot of money by replacing our old heat pump with a new, high efficiency model that I'm told would operate without propane back-up down to 10 degrees above zero or lower."

James A. Smith, Kaysville, Vt.: "My **Kawasaki** Mule 2510 4-WD utility vehicle equipped with a diesel engine is my best buy. This is a great machine for general farm use. I use it to carry everything I need for fencing and chores. With 4-WD it lets me go anywhere I need to. I'm an amputee so this machine serves as my off-road wheelchair. I can't take it to the grocery store, though."

James W. Blake, Rainelle, W. Va.: "My **Kubota** L3600 tractor equipped with a **Bush Hog** front-end loader and backhoe is my best

Wisconsin Farmers Happy With Italian-Built Rock Crusher

Last summer vegetable growers Allan Brooks and Tom Zick of Markesan, Wis., bought a machine they hope will make rock picking a job of the past. They bought an Italian-built FAE rock crusher, which chews rocks up into small pieces on-the-go.

The 3-pt. mounted, pto-powered crusher is distributed in the U.S. by Big Iron Equipment of Plover, Wis. (ph 888 696-4019 or 715 344-3401). The company offers models from 4 to 7 ft. wide. Brooks and Zick bought a 4-ft. model which weighs about two tons. They pull it behind their 100 hp New Holland TV 140 bi-directional tractor, equipped with a variable hydrostatic transmission.

The rock crusher has a 22-in. dia. rotor that turns against the direction of travel. The rotor is equipped with tungsten carbide teeth. Stones are crushed by being forced against a steel bar. The machine runs on skids that are bolted to the frame at either side. Working depth is varied by adjusting the skids.

"It works well and leaves a mixture of finely harrowed soil and small stones not much bigger than a quarter in size," says Allan, who farms with his father Gilbert. They grow more than 2,000 acres of peas, sweet corn and snap beans for area canning companies. "This spring we put about 125 hours on the machine grinding rocks on at least 40 acres.

"Canning companies want fields that are clean and this machine will crush rocks that are too small to hand pick. We have mainly limestone rocks which are relatively easy to crush. It handled rocks up to 15 in. in diameter with no problems. However, we also ran some smaller granite rocks through it with no problems although the crushing process does take longer for granite rocks. We traveled at speeds from 1.6 to 1.8 mph. If you go



This Italian-built FAE rock crusher chews rocks up into small pieces on-the-go. Vegetable growers Allan Brooks and Tom Zick hope the machine will make rock picking a job of the past.

too fast, the machine will pick up the rocks and run them through without totally crushing them. To maximize the output of the machine we just scalp the soil, running an inch or so deep.

Last spring Brooks attended the SIMA farm equipment show in France, where six different brands of rock crushers were on display. "I don't know why these machines haven't caught on in North America. At the show, the manufacturers of these machines said that some farmers in Europe run these machines up to 15 in. deep in the soil. However, that takes a lot of horsepower and is very destructive of soil structure."

The 4-ft. wide rock crusher sells for about \$31,000; the 7-ft. model, \$70,000.

"These machines aren't cheap, but I think they have real potential for doing custom work," notes Brooks.

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buy. It has about 800 trouble-free hours on it. I'd definitely buy another one."

Daryl Oakes, Cattaraugus, N.Y.: "My **Turner** bandsaw is my best buy (Turner Mills; ph 607 843-7318; www.turnermills.com). I had a Norwood sawmill for five years and, as good as that little sawmill was, I wanted a fully hydraulic mill offering easier operation and higher production. I looked at Woodmizer, along with others, then saw an ad for Turner Mills and ordered a video. This



sawmill is well built, and most parts for it can be bought at local Napa and Honda dealerships. The sawmill's main shaft did break after only about six months of use, but one call is all it took to get it fixed. Bill Turner not only took care of the problem immediately, he also made the shaft, gave me new bearings, and delivered them to my house for free. Try getting that kind of service from a big company.

"This sawmill is comparable to the Woodmizer LT 40 model, which costs about \$40,000. I spent less than \$15,000, and I think this sawmill will outperform the Woodmizer. If you're looking for a great sawmill at a good price, with a company that will stand 100 percent behind its product, call them."

Mike Allen, Skippers, Va.: "My worst buy is a 1998 **Case** 8930 front wheel assist tractor that I bought with only 1,200 hours on it. It now has 3,100 hours and I've had to replace two head gaskets, two fuel injectors, a water pump, two vacuum valves for the turbocharger, both brake pedal switches, a rear wheel bearing and seal, rocker shaft bushings and seals for the upper lift arm. Also, both rear tires separated at the wheel rim and had to be replaced, and I had to replace both hood shocks, a door shock, shifter accumulator, throttle cable, shifter cable, fan belt tensioner, and both lift arm connector blocks. "On the plus side, my dealer fixed every problem."

Billie Hearsman, Carlisle, Iowa: Billie's had problems with his 1994 **Dodge** Ram 3500 4-WD pickup equipped with a Cummins diesel engine. "The fit and finish of this vehicle is poor, and it has a poor front axle design. The 4-WD won't stay engaged because the vehicle has vacuum problems. Also, the door panels are falling apart and the radio doesn't work right. I realize this pickup is more than 10 years old, but the manufacturer won't stand behind anything. We have 30-year-old pickups that are in better shape. The only thing worth saving on it is the Cummins engine."

Jack Kaspri, Bovey, Minn.: "My **DR** 12 1/2 hp walk-behind brush mower has lived up to my expectations and is my best buy. It clears 1 to 1 1/2-in. dia. brush with ease. I added a 42-in. mower deck that works equally as well. The unit is well built, and the attachments for it can be installed in only about five minutes."

Jim Heyboer, Nashville, Mich.: "My New