

"Owner's Report" On Best & Worst ATV's

Are you satisfied with your ATV? How could it be made better? What around-the-farm chores do you use it for? What attachments have you purchased or built to make your ATV more useful? What buying tips do you have for other farmers planning to buy an ATV?

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

Here's how the survey shaped up:

"My only complaint is that I wish they would improve the gas mileage," says Richard L. Josefiak, Rozel, Kan., who's otherwise happy with his 1992 Polaris 350 4-WD. "It's handy for all types of jobs around the farm. I put around 2,500 miles a year on my ATV. Most of these miles are for checking flood irrigation. It saves a lot of wear and tear on our pickups. Also, I fitted it with a small sprayer with spray booms and a hand wand. Makes it handy for spot spraying bindweed and spraying around buildings and along fence rows and irrigation pipe. One improvement they could make, in addition to improving mileage, is to make chain adjustment easier."

Jud Pickup, Cochrane, Alberta, owns a 1984 Honda Big Red. "We're pleased with it for many around-the-farm chores but one thing I don't like is that the throttle is operated by the thumb of right hand. Can sometimes be awkward and tiresome."

"We use our 1987 Honda to poison gophers, bait field mice and to pull a sprayer and fertilizer spreader as well as to check field conditions. It's been very reliable. To spread fertilizer, we mounted a 3-pt. spinner spreader on a home-built dolly. Lets us get fertilizer onto wet spots. Has 700 lbs. capacity. I also built a 100-gal. sprayer with 30-ft. booms and wide flotation tires. Works excellent for wet winter spraying. One improvement I'd like to see is to make a tachometer and speedometer standard equipment," says James A. Vuylsteke, Hillsboro, Oregon.

John Matthews, Albany, Texas, owns a "best buy" 1992 Suzuki 4-WD. "We use it for general scouting of pastures, crops, fences, etc. It also helps for moving cattle and running errands around the ranch to save pickup use. We plan to get a sprayer for it in the future."

Foy Gibson, Bend, Texas, uses his Honda ATV with a small rope wick unit and with an electric-operated 20 gal. spray tank with a hand wand for spraying along fence lines and around buildings. "You have to be careful when riding over tree limbs or uneven territory. We've even found some big yearling cattle will try to jump over the machine and rider."

"It's more handy than a pickup," says Alvin Wahl, Gorham, Kan., pleased with his 1988 Yamaha tri-moto 200. "It starts easily, gets excellent gas mileage, uses no oil and the large low-pressure tires give a smooth ride. We use it to check cattle, water supply, fix fence, and take out minerals and salt."

Dennis Klindworth, Mazeppa, Minn., says his "ATV" doesn't have a motor because it's alive - a black quarter horse born in 1984. "It always starts, never needs a tune-up and I've never had to replace a tire. It does require a trim and a worming once a year but has never been stuck and can outwit most cows. I wish the 'manufacturer' could reduce hay consumption and it would be nice if my horse could saddle itself. My

horse pulls manure spreaders, sleighs, and is great at herding cattle. He also gives me a tender nudge when I'm a little blue. He'll go anywhere I ask him to go in any season. Available only in 4-WD."

"I use my 1986 Honda 4-WD to check crops and to spray crops with a home-built sprayer mounted on it. I also built a small trailer to pull behind it for odd jobs. Have had no problems with it whatever," says John Kastner, Yale, Iowa. "I built a ramp to load it on a pickup. The ramp folds in half and slides under the Honda."

Brian Bower, Massena, Iowa, owns a 1990 Polaris 350 4-WD. "It runs good and stays cool even in hot weather. I really like the floorboards and the automatic transmission. Brakes are better than most brands. We use it to cut thistles, check crops and spray small pastures and yards. It's the best machine for these jobs because you don't have to shift it and the floorboards keep your feed up out of grass or mud. I mounted

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a P&K 12-gal. sprayer on back that I rigged up with a 10-ft. boom which attaches with two pins so I can quickly change from 4 to 10 ft. width. I also have a 4-ft. commercial blade that mounts up front and I made a 4 by 5 ft. 2-WD trailer for it, too. I wish the 12-volt outlet on the rear of the machine had a switch to it either on the handle bars or on the floorboards."

"It takes the place of two riding horses for getting cattle in and doesn't have to be fed hay all winter. I use it every day," says Ralph Scheidegger, Ridgeway, Wis., about his 1988 Polaris 4-WD. "It's been virtually trouble-free. The variable-speed transmission is really swell."

"This is one of the best pieces of machinery on the farm. We use it 365 days a year," says Glen Schweppe, Syracuse, Neb., about his 1986 Honda 250 4-trax. "The only repair we made was to replace the brushes in the starter and it still has the original battery. My wife says we didn't need it when we bought it but she wouldn't be without it now. One suggestion is that they could leave the top gear out of it. There isn't much need to be driving 50 plus miles per hour. We have a 30-gal. mounted sprayer that we bought and a home-built 2-wheel calf cart and 2-wheel flatbed trailer."

Gary Clark, Shelbyville, Kent., owns a 1989 Yamaha Pro Hauler. "It's got a lot of hours on it but has never been touched by a wrench. It does a lot of work pulling a trailer. I have two boys (age 10 and 13) and a wife who use it hard. This is the third Yamaha for us. I wish they would come up

with a different throttle system since the thumb control is hard to hold for a long time."

Steven R. Sheldon, Neshkoro, Wis., owns a 1985 Honda 250 3-wheeler. "I have had a lot of carburetor problems. Water gets in the fuel even if you use isopropyl alcohol in the winter. The water gets into the fuel enrichment valve, which acts as a choke. The valve then rusts shut, making the engine all but impossible to start in all but the warmest weather. Wish they would go to a simple old fashioned choke instead of an enrichment valve, or maybe even a primer button like on a lawn mower."

"So far we're very satisfied with the performance of our 1990 Yamaha 350. It starts and runs well and has lots of power. In the spring and summer we use it to scout crops and in the early spring we use it to check cows while calving. We like it for these jobs because the fields and pastures are normally soft during this time of year and we don't tear them up. We built a 2-wheel trailer for it that lets us haul just about anything with it," says David W. Wiegand, Drakesville, Iowa. "My recommendation to anyone buying an ATV is that if you're going to use it to pull with, I would get one with a big engine with a gear transmission, big tires, adjustable suspension, and 4-WD."

"This is my second Suzuki and we're still well-satisfied," says Donald Bish, Giltner, Neb., about his 1992 Suzuki 250 4-WD. "I like the convenience of the gear shift levers. They're right in front of you and you can shift on the go from one range to another. Also, the independent suspension makes it like riding in a Cadillac. They could improve the oil sight gauge which is under the fender and in front of the back wheel. Muds gets on the window and you can't read it. Also, it's hard to get the drain plug off to change oil because there's a shield over the plug. I used a torch to cut part of it away. In addition, you can't get the oil filter off without taking off one of the rear wheels."

"We operate six poultry houses spread out over a distance of about 1/2 mile. I use our 1992 Polaris 250 to carry tools back and forth. Gets me there fast and makes me more productive," says Mike Rexrode, Fort Seybert, W. Va. "The ride is excellent. We added racks to the front and rear."

Roger Eustace, Castile, N.Y., thinks his EZ-Go golf cart makes the perfect ATV. "It's simple. No clutch or gear shift. Just step on the gas and go. It has good springs

and shocks and is quiet. Carries two people easily on conventional seats - you don't have to straddle the engine. It's low to the ground yet has good ground clearance. We added a plywood cargo box with a tailgate, two lid-top tool boxes, a 14-gal. 12-volt sprayer, and a radio. Unless you are going through 6 in. of mud and snow or climbing over timber out in the woods, who needs an expensive \$3,500 ATV. Most golfers sell their carts before they wear out for about \$500. Be prepared, though - they're so handy, if you buy one you'll end up buying another one."

"We live on the edge of the desert and there are few places we can't go with our 1982 Honda Big Red," says Harold Hentges, Overton, Nevada. "We use it to pull a lawn sweeper, to haul grass clippings and to run my dog three miles every day."

"My only complaint about my 1987 Honda 250 is the bad paint and subsequent heavy rust we've experienced due to our salt air environment. This happened even though we tried to protect it with rest inhibiting petroleum sprays. Also, the Japanese tires on it were poor. I switched to Goodyear. I use it summer and winter for household hauling from our airstrip and use it to mow alders on runway shoulders with a modified 5hp. lawn mower which I set at a 6 in. height and tow behind the ATV," says Robert M. Evanson, Cordova, Ark.

"We've never been very satisfied with our 1982 Honda Big Red. We've had a lot of service work done and it still doesn't run well. Can't keep the brakes working on back," says Charles N. Nichols, Jr., Molina, Colo.

"I can't walk so without my 1991 Kawasaki 500 4-WD Mule I couldn't do anything. I get into it from my mobility cart and use it to get the paper and mail, go to the barn, fill bird feeders, etc. Serves me very well," says Jay V. Cox, Goodrich, Mich.

"Our 1991 Polaris 250 is a little noisy and it could have a windshield for winter, but otherwise we're satisfied without it," says M. Harkins, Crockett, Tex. "We use it to check and pen cattle everyday and pull a small trailer for fence repair, etc. The Polaris transmission is nice for women and kids because there's no shifting. I made a V-shaped towbar to mount on front so I can tow it behind a tractor."

Crescencio G. Perez, Seguin, Texas, who is a certified ATV instructor, likes his 1992 Honda 300. "It handles all our chores well

World's First Diesel-Powered ATV

A diesel-powered ATV made its debut at the Royal Show in England this summer.

What's ironic about the new machine is that it's made in America but will not be available in either the U.S. or Canada. It's actually a standard Polaris 4-WD Trail Boss repowered with a Japanese-built 300 cc Yanmar engine. E.P. Barras, the company that imports Polaris ATV's into England, makes the conversion.

"There are many benefits to using a diesel engine. The most obvious is fuel economy. A full tank will take you twice as far for a fraction of the cost," says Steve Hewson, general manager.

The repowered machine still has most of the characteristics of the standard Polaris 4-WD including automatic transmission

with three speed ranges and 4-WD that kicks in with the flip of a switch and then reverts back to 2-WD automatically after the obstacle has been cleared.

The new diesel engine is said to have much greater torque than the gas engine. One disadvantage is that it's noisier, particularly when idling.

The diesel engine adds about \$700 to the price of the Polaris machine. A spokesman for Polaris Industries in the U.S. told FARM SHOW there are no plans to offer a diesel-powered ATV in North America.

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