

## Best & Worst Buys

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backfeed, but it didn't cost \$6,000 or \$7,000 like comparable machines so I'm happy with it."

**Ken Schultz, Chicago, Ill.:** "I've welded everything from sheet metal to 1 1/2-in. thick steel with my 1995 Miller Bobcat 225 welder and it has performed beautifully. It's equipped with a generator that allows me to take it into the field for performing jobs such as operating a grinder, etc.

"I'm impressed with my 1997 DeWalt 9.6-volt cordless drill. I've used it to drive more than 200 screws without having to recharge the battery. It comes with an extra battery which is nice to have on hand.

"I have a complaint with Sears Craftsman tools, particularly their screwdrivers, breaker bars, and ratchets. Recently it seems that they're making these tools thinner and with less steel than the original ones. I've had to exchange a 1/2-in. breaker bar three times in one month. The screwdriver tips break with just the slightest use, and I've had more than one ratchet come apart in my hand. It's a good thing these tools are guaranteed, but it's still a hassle to have to drive back and forth to exchange them."

**Sidney Sellars, Newport, Nova Scotia:** Sidney likes the Nova plastic nose cone that he uses for skidding logs (Nova Sylva Inc., 915 Blais St., Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada). "It has saved me countless trips between the tractor and log. It'll even guide a tree up over a brush pile. It's light and easy to handle. I wondered whether it would hold up in cold weather, but durability hasn't been a problem."

**Steve Baugher, Manila, Ark.:** Steve has been farming for 26 years and currently has

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2,000 acres under cultivation. "In February, 1995, I bought a Deere 8300 4-WD tractor. I paid \$90,000 for the tractor plus \$2,250 for an extended warranty. From the beginning, the tractor shifted rough and would sometimes almost completely stop between gear shifts. The dealer could find nothing wrong. About a month after we bought it, while traveling at about 17 mph in high gear, the wheels

locked up. The driver was thrown against the steering wheel and the engine killed. The transmission continued to lock up as the tractor was driven back to our shop.

"The dealer took it to his shop and after it was returned the power steering locked, almost causing an accident. And the transmission was still not working right. The dealer picked up the tractor for repairs and requested a new transmission from the company, but Deere refused. Deere also refused

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to send someone out to identify a foreign material found in the valves that control the transmission.

"We then had to wait while the dealer ordered stands to split the tractor and special tools to work on the transmission. Meanwhile, I was getting nervous because I needed the tractor to plant my 2,000 acres of crops. With just one 12-row planter, I have to start planting early. Neither Deere nor the local dealer offered a loaner tractor.

"At one point, the mechanics removed the pto and determined that the differential was the source of the foreign material in the transmission. They replaced the entire differential and rebuilt the transmission. The tractor was in the shop for 25 days.

"Five days after we got it back, the power steering locked up and the dealer's mechanic determined that the transmission needed to be overhauled again.

"At this point I went to the dealer and asked to look at the parts which had been taken from the tractor the first time. The old differential had the word 'broken' written on it. The shop foreman stated that it had been installed that way at the factory.

"On April 14th, I bought a new Deere 8400 tractor in order to get our crops planted, paying \$106,500 for it.

"Deere Credit called about nine months later to demand the annual payment on the tractor, which still had not been repaired, and I declined to pay. Soon after, another Deere dealer repossessed the tractor.

"Here's where the story gets interesting. Deere shipped the tractor to a dealer in Kan-



### Five Deere Tractors Are Their "Best Buys"

**Kenneth C. Brecht, Moorcroft, Wyo.:** Kenneth's pleased with the five "best buy" Deere tractors he and colleagues use at Keyhole State Park near Moorcroft.

Left to right in the photo are: a 1997 5500, a 1981 302, a 1990 770, a 1990 1070, and, in front, a 1985 660 lawn tractor.

"During summer, these tractors will be used every day for jobs at the park," says Kenneth. "Rotary mowers mount on the 5500, 302 and 770. A backhoe mounts on the 1070 and a mower deck on the 660. When the 500 and 302 aren't mowing roadsides and fields, they are used to load and level dirt. Both of these tractors are fitted with brackets to permit the use of forks to handle poles, posts or trees that have blown down or have been removed because of disease.

"We have six miles of hiking trails through various terrain and we mow this trail to make it easier and safer for hikers to follow. This rugged 770 with MFWD is able to follow the trail with ease. The 4-ft. mower deck keeps the grass in check.

"The 302 was the workhorse of the

park up to last year. This 3-cyl. diesel worked every day into winter. Fitted with a back blade, it was used to push snow into piles and to blade snow off roads and parking lots. Warmer weather saw it loading gravel and dirt with a 3/4 cu. yd. bucket and back-dragging with the blade. Also, in the past, it was fitted with a 100-gal. tank and sprayer to fight weeds along roadsides and parking lots. It has also been used to mow ditches and camp grounds.

"The newest addition to our green line is the 5500 with MFWD powerhouse. We plan to equip it with a 15-ft. folding pull-behind mower. It's currently equipped with a 6-ft. Bush Hog for mowing. Last fall, we used it to load 500 yards of top soil left over from a parking lot graveling project. With the front wheel assist it was no problem to fill the 7/8 cu. yd. bucket to overflowing.

"Our smallest and oldest tractor is the 550 lawn tractor. It's used to mow two acres of lawn surrounding park housing and offices and to mow around camp sites. It's on its second engine and shows no signs of slowing down."

sas where it was sold to a nearby farmer. I've talked to the farmer who now owns the tractor and he was unaware of the history of the tractor when he bought it.

"Deere's warranty claim history on the Deere 8300 tractor now shows that the second and third transmission repairs were made in Kansas, and that the repairs were made after 477 hours of operation. This means either that the transmission failed two additional times in Kansas and the two earlier failures were hidden from any prospective buyer, or that the site and hours-period were changed

so it looked like the tractor had been used for a much longer period before it failed."

Baugher has filed suit against Deere & Co. in Iowa because the tractor was manufactured in Waterloo. He's asking for compensation to cover expenses related to purchase and repair of the 8300, funds for lost cotton production due to the late planting start, a correction to his credit report, attorney fees, and punitive damages if Deere & Co. had prior knowledge of the tractor's defects. Baugher's attorney is Lawrence H. Crosby of St. Paul, Minn.

## Confused About The Pros And Cons Of Narrow Row Corn?

If you're confused about whether planting corn in narrow rows works, you're not alone. In the past couple years, studies have come out on both sides of the issue.

You might have heard of Illinois farmer Marion Calmer, who probably knows more about the pros and cons of narrow row corn than anyone else. After years of running extensive test plots on his farm near Alpha, Ill., he says, "Don't worry. It works."

Corn in 15-in. rows consistently provides yield increases of 8 to 15 bu. But it has to

be done right. Compaction must be kept to a minimum and, most importantly, you have to choose the correct variety, Calmer says.

For example, he cites one large study where 34 farmers in eight counties tried 15-in. corn on a total of about 1,000 acres. The growers tried 27 different varieties and about 80 percent of them had higher yields in the narrow rows as compared to 30-in. rows. Some of the varieties, however, simply could not handle the higher densities.

Calmer's 1,300 acre farm is run as an in-

dependent test farm. After he started trials with narrow row corn, he designed a new-style corn head to handle the narrow rows. His cornhead was recently acquired by Case-IH and should be on the market soon.

In the past couple years, surprisingly, corn in ultra-narrow 12-in. rows has out-yielded plots in 15, 18, 24, 30 and 36-in. rows. He plants 32,000 plants per acre with plants spaced 12 in. apart within the 12-in. rows.

Calmer has studied the effect of compaction on the narrow rows. He found that corn

planted between the wheels yielded about 30 percent higher than corn planted in the tire tracks. So he switched to radial tires on his tractor with low air pressure, and also added some coulters to his planter to loosen up the soil a little to break up surface compaction.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Marion Calmer, 550 N. Knox, Alpha, Ill. 61413 (ph 309 334-2609).