

"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 company to provide service.

Here's how the survey shaped up:

"I have two ATV's, a 1988 Yamaha Terraplo 350 equipped with pto and a 1992 Honda 300. They're both 'best buys' because they're absolutely trouble-free," reports James R. Knisley, Taylor, Wis.

"I use the Yamaha, which has an oil and fan-cooled engine and a differential, for heavy work like mowing two big lawns, spraying 120 acres of crops, picking up scattered bales and rocks out of fields, and pulling grain elevators and machinery around. I bought the Yamaha new in 1989 and the only thing I've had to do to it was replace the battery last year. The company made this model for only one year.

"I use my Honda year-around for recreation more than anything else because it has much softer suspension than the Yamaha. Works great for checking fences, running between farms, or for trail rides."

"I have constant problems with the engine on my 1993 Polaris 350 overheating and seizing pistons," says Leonard Juhnke, Sedgwick, Kan. "The company would not take care of the problem for me, but it's since started using water-cooled engines on

"Real disappointed" is how Dave Dwiggin, of Elwood, Neb., feels about the Kawasaki KLF 300 4-WD he bought new in 1990. "We had to completely overhaul the engine after only three years and now it needs another overhaul. It's built in Lincoln, Neb., so I really expected better. Everything on it could be improved. We bought it because we had nothing but bad experiences with 2-WD ATV's. They're useless in mud and not as agile in hilly pastures. But we had a Yamaha 2-WD for six years before we got the Kawasaki and it worked just fine in comparison."

Delvin Schuler, of Corona, S. Dak., nominates his 1985 shaft-driven Yamaha 200 3-wheeler equipped with electronic ignition as a "best buy." "It's my horse," he says. "It has a 5-speed automatic transmission, so it's perfect for going after cattle, hauling corn, and a variety of other chores that we use it for."

"I've had starter trouble with my 1992 Polaris 6-WD ever since it was about 90 days old," says Vern Thorp, of Oskaloosa, Iowa. "The starter apparently isn't covered by warranty and one dealer I took it to even laughed at me for suggesting it should be fixed under warranty. Anyway, I know why the company puts a rope pull starter on them. They might as well leave the starter off and tell you you're going to have to use the rope."

"I use my 1985 Honda 250 3-wheeler for checking fences, getting to areas where a tractor or pickup would cause too much soil compaction, and spot spraying in difficult-to-reach places," says Frank Hicks, Winchester, Kent. "It's been remarkably reliable and has required almost no repairs. However, the few parts it has needed have been extremely expensive."

"It sure is a handy utility vehicle around our farm," says Albert Holmquist, Palisade, Minn., about his Deere Gator "6 by 4." "It's much easier to get on and off than a four-wheeler. It has a trailer hitch and pulls a good size trailer load."

Overall, Donald Berryman's 1993 Yamaha Kodiak 400 4-WD, is "OK" for fencing, checking cows, and spraying pastures. However, the Cozad, Neb., farmer complains that it shifts hard and is hard to start in cold weather.

Wahpeton, N. Dak., farmer Guy Klosterman is "very satisfied" with his 1995 Polaris Sportsman 400 4-WD. He uses it for checking fields and spot spraying. "It rides smooth, goes fast, and is easier to drive than any other ATV I've ever driven because I don't constantly have to shift gears."

"Our 1991 Suzuki LT2505 is handy for checking cows and grass regrowth, un-reeling electric fence wire, carrying fence posts and minerals, etc.," says Gregg Lukes, of Omega, Wis. "It starts easily, handles well, is peppy and smooth-running. However, it needs larger, heavier fenders

and should be capable of hauling bigger loads."

A 1991 Polaris 250 2-WD is one of Harry Schroeder's "best buys" for rock-picking and other chores. "The Polaris transmission and suspension are far superior to other makes I've driven and 2-WD is adequate for us," says the Centralia, Ontario, farmer. "It could, however, use wider mud flaps."

Dale Scheiderer's favorite ATV is a 1977 Heald Super Tryke kit (Benton Har-

"The transmission and suspension are far superior to other makes I've driven."

bor, Mich.) he saw featured in "Best of FARM SHOW." "It's easy to operate because it has a centrifugal clutch transmission," says Scheiderer, of Marysville, Ohio. "Its low profile, wide track, and differential rear end provide exceptional stability and allow for sharp turns. It has excellent soft-ride suspension."

"We've had very few problems with our 1981 Kawasaki KLT 200," says Donald H. Petersen, of Sebeka, Minn. "However, the company should have positioned the fuel tank above the engine so the fuel would gravity flow into the engine or an electric fuel pump. The vacuum-operated fuel pump doesn't seem to get the fuel to the carburetor when the ATV isn't used for a long time. I just blow into the gas tank vent hose to refuel the carburetor. That way, it always starts right away and it saves on batteries and starters, too."

Gary Hoper, Stephen, Minn., has had trouble with his 1993 Polaris 350L "2 by 4." "It's too slow. The company ought to

make a lighter model without electric start or 4-WD but equipped with clutch transmission. Also, they should make more 4-stroke engine models so they're faster."

Ed Hlus, Innisfree, Alberta, is "happy" with both his 1984 Honda Big Red 200 and 1985 Honda Big Red 250. "We use them for rounding up cattle, checking crops, spot spraying, and pulling small trailers. No major problems."

Robert H. Swearingen, of Roanoke, Ind., likes his 1994 Deere Gator "4 by 2." "It's just like having a small pickup. We use it mainly to haul wood and mulch. My only complaint is that it needs a little bigger engine for more speed."

"As a rice farmer, I use my 1995 Honda Four Trac 200 Type II almost every day and it's the best investment I've made in a long time," says Charles E. Bieber, Mamou, La. "I use it to ride my levees to check water conditions and the status of my crop. I also use it to spray levees for weeds. With the big tires, it'll do anything I want it to. I love it."

Brian Kengor, Washington, Pa., souped up his 1987 Honda 250 for racing when he's not feeding cows with it. His only complaint: "Make parts less expensive."

"For the most part, my 1989 Polaris 4-WD is a very dependable machine," says Crookston, Minn., farmer Tim Boucher. "My biggest complaint is how badly it smokes. When I check fields, I have to drive into the wind or else I'll choke."

Ever since a mechanic finally diagnosed and fixed a problem on it, Allen B. Headley likes his 1988 Kawasaki KLF Bayou a lot more.

"I had the valves adjusted five times," says the Pensacola, Fla., farmer. "Then this mechanic who really knew what he was doing fixed an induction leak in the intake manifold and my problems were solved. As for features, I really like the locking/unlocking rear differential. It helps to keep

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its ATV's. This suggests to me that other Polaris ATV owners were having the same problem.

"I wish Polaris would equip its ATV's with a twist throttle on the handlebars, on-demand 4-WD, large all-terrain tires, and McPherson struts."

A 1994 Yamaha Kodiak 400 4-WD is "real reliable and has yet to fail me," says Louis Jacobsen of North Platte, Neb. "It's real handy for driving cows, checking pastures and irrigation pivots, and transferring machinery and parts from one field to another. It's also adequate for hand-spraying and carrying baby calves, although the engine noise often scares mother cows. Because it's 4-WD, it's also handy in mud and snow."

"However, a fuel gauge and foot throttle would improve its usefulness and a lower initial cost would improve its appeal, I believe."

Jon Mills likes his 1993 Kawasaki Bayou 400 4-WD for rounding up livestock, unrolling fence wire, spraying yards and gardens, and hauling farm supplies. However, the Salem, Iowa, farmer also suggests some improvements. "They should replace the throttle with one that can be preset for constant speed so I wouldn't have to hold it down with my thumb all the time. It would greatly improve the vehicle's performance for jobs like spraying."



Tandem Axle Trailer For ATV's

You'll like this big new tandem axle trailer that can be pulled behind any ATV or garden tractor.

The trailer's 4-ft. wide, 6-ft. long bed has a diamond metal floor and 8-in. high removable sides and tailgate. Slide-in livestock racks are optional. It's equipped with big 25 by 12.9 flotation tires.

"It has a lot of capacity and works great for doing yard work, hauling fencing supplies, transporting small animals, and other jobs," says inventor Ron Alexander. "The tandem axles help the trailer pull easier and provide a smoother ride. The

frame is made from 1 1/2 by 3-in., 3/16-in. thick rectangular steel tubing. The racks are made from 1-in. sq., 14-ga. steel tubing and have a swing gate on back. The trailer comes standard with a drop leg hitch. An optional gooseneck hitch is available for 6 by 6 ATV's."

Sells for \$1,708. The livestock racks sell for \$250. Alexander says he's looking for dealers.

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