

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

buy is my **Western Ag Superior** hay tarp. It's easy to install and stays on no matter how hard the wind blows. I bought my first tarp four years ago and it has held up well while keeping my hay in "like-new" condition. It paid for itself the first year."

Victor Miller, Halfway, Mo.: Victor's impressed with his 1998 **Deere** round baler. "It's an outstanding baler that needs very little maintenance. I used it to make more than 4,000 bales the first year, including 1,000 silage bales. I never had a problem with it plugging up or with starting a bale, whether I was making wet or dry bales.

"My worst buy is my **New Idea** 5209 disc mower-conditioner. It's a high maintenance mower that isn't designed for custom haying. The pods on it have to be greased about every two weeks. Another problem is that it rides on little shoes that don't last even a year. It should have adjustable skids."

Mike Marcotte, Jackson, N.J.: "My **Deere** 790 utility tractor is a very powerful and useful tractor and as far as I'm concerned works almost perfect. I use it with a front-end loader and mid-mount finish mower.

"My **Sand Welding** 6 by 12-ft. dump trailer is a heavy duty trailer that outperforms anything else I've ever seen (Sand Welding, Inc., Albany, Minn.). It has a capacity of 12,000 lbs."

Richard Zimmerman, McBride, B.C.: An Ag Air mist blower from **Big John** rates as Richard's "best buy". "We mounted it on a GM 4-WD pickup without a box. There's no boom to worry about. It can be used to apply all types of crop chemicals, but we use it mostly to apply fish emulsion on alfalfa. Only three spray tips are used so we can use large tips which won't plug up with the fish emulsion. It covers a 60-ft. wide area and, because it uses air to break up the droplets, requires only one gallon of water per acre. As a result one hundred gallons goes a long way."

Larry Wendt, Napoleon, Ohio: "My 1985 **Honda** Big Red 3-wheeler ATV is very reliable but starts hard in cold weather. We use it for scouting crops and moving machinery. We use a home-built tow bar to pull it behind trucks or other farm equipment and drive the ATV back home. We bought a 15-gal. 12-volt electric sprayer for it, which works great for spraying missed strips caused whenever a nozzle plugs up on our field sprayer. We also use it to pull a 30-ft. **Speidel** weed wiper. I think it's best to use 4-ply tires on ATV's because 2-ply tires puncture too easy."

Jon E. Otts, Canastota, N.Y.: "We have several **Stihl** chain saws and we like them all. My son and I do tree work part time and have used the company's saws for four or five years. I can't say enough good about them. They always start right up whether the weather is hot or cold without any vapor lock as on a lot of other brands. Our topping saw is five years old and the spark plug on it has never been removed.

"Our worst buy is our **Echo** 6700 chain saw. We've taken it to three different dealers and every time it comes back it runs great for about two days. Then, the carburetor has to be adjusted or cleaned or the fuel filter has to be changed. Now it's sitting unused under a bench because I don't have enough evil in me to sell it to someone else, and I certainly am not going to sink any more money into it."

Ken Schmitz, Fond du Lac, Wis.: "My

worst buy was my 1972 **Deere** 4430 tractor equipped with hydraulic front wheel drive. I bought it used and it turned out to be the biggest piece of junk I ever had. I used it to plow and always worried that something would go wrong with it.

"At the time it was made Deere didn't offer mechanical front wheel assist. The hydraulic front wheel drive on this model could be used with the transmission in either low or high torque. The problem was that in high torque it pumped a lot of oil. The company recommended using high torque only in an emergency but that wasn't always practical. One time the oil got so hot it blew the hoses out and oil went flying all over the tractor, including the cab. It was a real mess and cost a lot to repair."

Leonard Seltzer, Manhattan, Ill.: "My best buy is my **John Deere** 1240 4-row planter which I bought used in 1978 for \$1,600. It was equipped with liquid fertilizer tanks which I removed right away because they obstructed my view. I also had to

"One time the oil got so hot it blew the hoses out and oil went flying all over the tractor, including the cab."

rebuild the springs and fingers. The stainless steel bands were worn out as well and a year or so later I replaced the shoes. Altogether I spent about \$300 to rebuild it. The company still builds similar plateless planters and provides most parts for older models.

"I farm 160 acres and use this planter to sow 80 acres of corn every year. It's nothing fancy but I believe the new planters on the market today will do any better. You can buy these planters at local auctions cheap and fix them up. Deere still makes all the parts. They're worth working on and rebuilding. It's a good way to keep your overhead down."

Albert Erickson, Mena Ark.: "My best buy is **Mobile Dimensions** sawmill (Mobile Mfg. Co., 798 N.W. Dunbar Ave., Box 250, Troutdale, Ore. 97060; website: www.mobilemfg.com ph 503 666-5593). I have six sons who work with me and when we decided to buy a mill we looked at different models all over the U.S. After seeing this sawmill operate, three of my neighbors have bought the same model. It's accurate to within 1/32 of an inch so even lumber cut for home construction requires no planing.

"It's a self-contained sawmill with a circular blade, instead of a bandsaw blade. It mounts on a lightweight, 2-wheeled trailer so you can take it anywhere. The saw cuts logs by traveling through the log instead of the log traveling through the saw as with conventional sawmills. As a result, any size log can be completely sawed without being moved or turned.

"It's powered by a 53 hp Volkswagen gas engine which drives a 30-in. vertical main blade and horizontal edger blades, allowing you to simultaneously make more than one cut per pass. You first use the vertical blade to cut off a little slab of the log. On the next pass you make three cuts at a time - one vertical and two horizontal - allowing you to cut out a complete board. With the top edger blade set to cut 12 in. above the bottom edger

blade, you can produce one 2 by 12 board per pass. By using a third horizontal blade, you can make two finished boards in one



pass. Once the cut is made, the saw automatically reverses itself. "Cutting width is adjusted with a dial-type rack and pinion mechanism that precisely controls the saw's horizontal movement. A similar gauge controls the edger blades, precisely fixing the dimension of the side cut.

"The unit weighs less than 850 lbs. and breaks down into separate compact compo-



nents so you can easily transport it to remote locations. Some people have even used it to make log cabins and fishing lodges."

Prices start at \$14,000 and range up as high as \$24,000.

Clem Empfield, Penn Run, Pa.: "My all-time best buy is my 1947 **Farmall** 'BN' tractor which I bought used in 1972 for \$650. For years I used it to do all my cultivating and hay raking. I also used it to pull a 2-row corn planter and a 12-disc opener grain drill. It has cost me very little other than routine maintenance such as oil and filter changes. I replaced the front tires twice and the rear tires once. I had to replace one rear wheel rim due to calcium corrosion and had a leak in the radiator fixed last year. Neither the head nor the oil pan has ever been off the engine.

"In 1985 I equipped the tractor with a new 6-ft. **Woods** belly-mount finish mower, which is also a best buy. I use it to mow about five acres per week. In all that time, I've only replaced one set of blades, one drive belt, and the deck pulley. This mower is easy to operate and does a nice job. I'll never go back to mowing with a lawn tractor.

"My worst buy is a set of drill bits from **Harbor Freight**. They were pure junk."

Albert Bender, Port Austin, Mich.: A 1993 **Yamaha** 350 ATV rates as Albert's "best buy". "It has a lot of power, rides comfortably, and is easy to handle. It gets about 35 mpg. I use it for spraying, seeding clover, hauling bales, and moving hay wagons and gravity boxes. I bought an electric grass seeder for it as well as a 25-gal. sprayer, and I made my own tow bar and rock box for it. I also use it to pull a 42-ft. **Speidel** weed wiper. It's cheaper and faster than a pickup for short trips, and I can tow it behind farm equipment or a pickup. The only negative is that it's somewhat hard to start."

James Vorst, W. Lafayette, Ind.: "My 1996 **Polaris** 300 4-WD ATV performs well and has been mostly trouble-free. Although, I wish it came with a 4-stroke engine. My only complaints are that the parking brake lock is poorly designed. It's difficult to oil the front drive chain, and the muffler is a little noisy. I use it to between fields, to pull a small

trailer for doing odd chores, and to pull a small sprayer."

Cameron Weppler, Morse, Sask.: Cameron's happy with his 1994 **Flexi-Coil** 65 100-ft. sprayer equipped with a wind screen. "We direct-seed our crops which requires a lot of chemicals. This sprayer is built strong enough to survive the rigors of rough fields. I really like the wind screens and would never go back to a conventional sprayer. I also like the high clearance on this sprayer."

Terry Winter, Gull Lake, Sask.: "My best buy is my 1947 **Farmall** A tractor. We've used it every year and have overhauled it twice. Otherwise, we've just replaced the tires, batteries, etc. All major components on it, from the clutch to the starter, are original. It still runs great."

Henry M. Kozak, New Sarepta, Alberta: "My best buy is my **Deere** 2555 MFWD tractor equipped with a **Deere** 245 front-end loader. It has about 5,000 hours on it. I've replaced the water pump and tachometer but otherwise it has been trouble-free. I use it primarily for loader work but I haven't had to replace the clutch yet.

"My **Deere** 1360 rotary mower/conditioner, which I bought used, cuts hay in all conditions, wet or dry, tall or short, and at speeds up to 14 mph."

On the negative side, Henry says his **Deere** 1219 sicklebar-type mower-conditioner, which he bought new, caused him "nothing but trouble". "In heavy hay the reel wouldn't turn. Instead, hay would wrap around the reel belt causing it to slip no matter how much tension was on the belt. In wet conditions, such as second cut clover, the knife would plug up constantly. I couldn't go more than 4 1/2 mph in the field and usually spent more time going backward - in order to clear the knives - than going forward. I traded it in for a used **Deere** 1360 rotary mower-conditioner and it's a best buy. I'll never go back to a sicklebar mower again.

"My **Breeze** windmill is a worst buy. I wanted to use it to aerate my pond to improve the water quality for cattle and fish. Unfortunately, vibration caused the tail section to break off which allowed the blades to hit the mounting pole. The machine was still under warranty so I returned it to the manufacturer. However, instead of replacing the blades all they did was cut the damaged sections from the ends of the blades. This reduced the performance as it required higher wind speeds before it would turn. The bearing on the crankshaft is too light and will only last about four to six months before it has to be replaced. Now the machine has developed an air leak and won't build pressure. I've replaced every bearing and seal on the machine and rebuilt the pump, yet I still can't seem to get it to work properly. This machine has been nothing but a big waste of money and time."

Glyn Underwood, Strawberry Plains, Tenn.: Glyn likes his 1990 **Yamaha** Pro Hauler 250 ATV. "It's a 2-WD model but it has a differential lock similar to tractors which makes it easy to turn. It's equipped with a 3 by 3 1/2-ft. bed on back. I use it to check cattle, repair fences, seed wildlife plots, and oversee pastures with clover. I bought a **Northern Hydraulics** sprayer for it and also a 12-volt seeder sold by **Tractor Supply**. They're both excellent products. If

(Continued on next page)