

## Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

some. Also, the twin V-belt pulley design ensures maximum torque from the Honda engine to the saw head.

"It comes with a 6-in. by 20-ft. solidly constructed, heavy duty track which I really like, as it eliminates the need to assemble and disassemble multiple track pieces for basic use, important for portability. Also, the track and frame are very sturdy and stable. The trailer package makes this sawmill easy to transport anywhere, whether over the road or on your property.

"It's apparent that whoever designed this unit took the operator's needs and ease of use into consideration. They paid attention to many minor details that make this sawmill easy to use.

"This saw will cut all sizes and types of logs up to 40 inches in diameter."

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**John A. Rissler, New Enterprise, Penn.:** "My compliments to **Kohler** and **Hustler Turf** for supporting their products after the sale. My 2006 Hustler zero turn riding mower equipped with a 66-in. deck cuts excellent in all conditions and works great on hills. By the end of this year we'll have put more than 1,800 hours on it, which is more than most people will put on a mower in a lifetime. I've had to replace only one deck belt, at 670 hours.

"The mower's 30 hp **Kohler** engine originally had a power loss when going uphill, but Kohler remedied that by installing a new intake elbow to prevent flooding. Also, it consumed 20 oz. of oil per 12-hour day (believed to have been partially caused by carburetor flooding). We added oil every day until the mowing season was over. Then at 850 hours Kohler paid for installing new updated piston and ring sets. Now this engine uses only minimal amounts of oil like any other engine. The company's support system really helped and will be a big factor in our future buying decisions."

**Francis J. Nemetz, Negaunee, Mich.:** "In your last issue there was a worst buy from an Oklahoma reader who claimed that his 2006 **Dodge** 3500 pickup averaged only 6 mpg, even when running empty. I think this is impossible. There would be a continuous trail of dense black smoke behind this truck if it did get such poor fuel mileage.

"We recently made a trip to Pierre, S. Dak. from Marquette, Mich., pulling a tandem dump trailer. We were fighting a head wind on the way out but still averaged 16.1 mpg. The pickup we used was a 2006 **Dodge** 3500 4-WD model equipped with an excellent Cummins diesel engine and automatic transmission. It's definitely a best buy."

**Rodney Davis, Arundel, Maine:** Rodney bought a **Jackson** add-on power steering kit for his 1963 Ford 4000 tractor and says he likes it except for one problem (ph 620 357-6546; www.jacksonpowersteering.com). "It works good except the drag links are too tight and will bend. Stronger drag links should be supplied with the kit. I've put steel rods inside and welded on steel sleeves in order to keep the clamps from slipping."

**Allan Schiefelbein, Whitemouth, Manitoba:** "My best buy ever is my 1969 **Case** 580 loader backhoe, which I bought used 18 years ago. I paid \$4,500 for it and it has paid for itself many times over. I've used

it and abused it but it has required no major repairs. The loader is built strong and fast and accurate, and it works nice for handling manure or bales or even doing landscaping work. The weight of the hoe provides good stability. The best part is it still helps me make money.

"My **Richie Thrifty King** 100-head energy-free cattle waterer is my worst buy. The problem is the inserts for the lid bolts are mounted in such a way that the insulation gets saturated with water, making it useless. I've installed a 1,200-watt submersible heater and the riser pipe is heated, yet it still freezes. I plan to replace this unit with a regular fountain and burn this headache."

**Craig Smith, Livingston, La.:** "I'm absolutely delighted with the **EZ Boardwalk** manual sawmill that I bought about one year ago. I lost a good deal of timber during Hurricane Katrina and didn't want to waste the potential lumber. I shopped for several months, then saw this mill, among several others, at a demonstration hosted by the Louisiana State University's Ag Center. I recognized that it was built stronger than the others (larger carriage wheels, high quality bearings, etc.) and had more clever ideas (angle cut, throttle and blade engagement, etc.). Also, it cost about \$1,800 less than other comparable models. Furthermore, I'm delighted with the manufacturer and its willingness to help.

"This mill earned bragging rights recently when I sliced a 32-in. oak log and a 32-in. pine log into slabs. I'm still amazed that a manual sawmill can do this, and do it so well. I've cut about 25,000 board feet with this unit so far, and it's still in great shape. I expect it'll last a lifetime. I highly recommend this mill to anyone in the market for a sawmill."

**Corban Bigbee, Broken Bow, Neb.:** "My 1997 **Honda** Foreman 400 ATV equipped with a foot-operated shift lever is my best buy. It has survived working with cattle, and also a center pivot irrigator running over it, without any structural damage. It now has almost 30,000 miles and 3,000 hours but is still purring away as strong as ever, with no major problems. I'd recommend this machine to anyone."

**P.J. Ranck, Gratiot, Ohio:** "Our **Dakota Driveway Alarm** is our best buy (Dakota Alert Inc., Elk Point, S. Dak. ph 605 356-2772). Safety and security is a top priority for us. Hidden in a bird house, this alarm provides advance warning of vehicles or walk-ins. It's a durable, quality product."

**Gar Harris, Garden Grove, Calif.:** Gar's unhappy with his **Mantis** rototiller. "This unit is a 20-lb. multi-purpose tiller, edger, aerator and dethatcher. It was advertised as being easy to start and requiring minimum maintenance - just add grease and clean the spark plug. But this machine has always been hard to start. The company sent a new plug and fuel filter but that didn't help. I haven't been able to use this rototiller for two years."

**Enos Nissley, Catlett, Va.:** "My 1995 **Ford** pickup equipped with a 6-cyl. engine starts, idles and runs well. It's also fuel efficient.

"My **Knight** mixer equipped with a twin vertical auger mixes round bales thoroughly whether they're dry or wet. It's equipped with weigh scales that work well."

**Allen Schlabach, Fredericksburg, Ohio:** Allen likes his **Omnex** T110/R160 radio remote control (ph 800 663-8806; www.omnexcontrols.com). "I purchased this 18-function remote control two years ago to use with my new hydraulic hoof-trimming chute. It has been trouble-free, even though I use it five days a week. I really like the ability to be away from the chute and still catch the cows as they enter the chute. It's espe-

cially valuable when I have to load cows by myself.

"My 1998 **Hotsy** 761A pressure washer is my worst buy. The Wisconsin Robin engine and Hawk pressure pump on it are reliable and are still being used. However, the hot water burner didn't work the first time I tried to use it. While it was still under warranty I took it back to the shop many times, but when I got it back it never worked for more than a few months at a time. I finally got tired of throwing good money after bad and removed the heater. Now I'm using this unit as a cold water washer."

**Jay Vics, Menands, N.Y.:** A 2005 Rascal 4-wheel scooter rates as Jay's "worst buy." "Within the first month the right front wheel fell off. I called the company several times but they never returned my calls. Seven months later the seat fell off and I had to have it welded on. Two months after that two tires went flat and I had to buy two new tubes. I put a stop on payments but still could get no response from the company. Last year I got a copy of my credit report which showed that they wrote me off as bad debt."

**Pete Hinson, Foley, Ala.:** Pete's impressed with his 2001 **Kubota** 3010 DSL tractor. "It has required only routine maintenance - no problems. It's like a Timex watch - it takes a lickin' but keeps on tickin'." We use it to scrape dirt and with a finish mower to cut six acres of lawn. We also use it to yank out an occasional tree or bush. I just can't say enough good things about this tractor."

On the "worst buy" side, he lists his **DR** trimmer. "It's built tough and I thought it would run forever. However, after four years it quit working. It blew a head gasket and a valve stuck, and I can't seem to fix it. It's almost as cheap to buy a new one as it is to repair the motor."

**"In just three years we've replaced more than 50 spark plugs and 25 filters."**

**Omer Baucom, Lawton, Okla.:** Omer's "best buy" is his 1989 **Ford** pickup equipped with a 302 cu. in. engine and automatic transmission. "I bought this pickup used in 1990 with 25,000 miles on it. I put more than 200,000 miles on it, then two years ago I gave it to my son. It's still going strong. Other than routine maintenance, the engine has never been touched."

**Charles W. McDonald, Inwood, W. Va.:** "My **Deere** GT235 lawn tractor equipped with a 20 hp Briggs & Stratton engine is my worst buy. The engine started fouling spark plugs when it was only a month old. The air filter would become clogged with oil and would choke the engine until the plugs fouled. The company says they don't warranty electrical parts. We would replace the air filter and install two new plugs and it would run good for four to six hours, but then the same problem would happen again. In three years we've replaced more than 50 spark plugs and 25 filters."

**D. Cramer, Ringwood, Okla.:** He nominates his 2002 **Deere** 7810 MFWD tractor as his "best buy". "This is a nice tractor. It's comfortable, quiet, has a good ride, is efficient and productive, and is built strong for its size. At the end of the day I don't feel as beat up and worn out as I do with our other IH tractors. It actually helps get things moving on our farm early in the morning, because whoever gets to the field first gets to drive the 7810."

He's not impressed with his **New Holland** 1441 15-ft. discbine. "This machine won't cut alfalfa without leaving a lot of it in the field. It leaves huge streaks of uncut hay between each cutterhead. It won't cut short hay at all, and it beats the leaves off the hay as it throws it into the crimper. Also, it puts a lot of dirt in the windrow. The dealer said the blades would last 300 to 400 acres, but in our sand they could hardly finish 80 acres. The blades had to be changed daily. It's a high maintenance machine, and its resale value was horrible. I'd never buy a New Holland discbine again."

**James J. Anthony, White Bluff, Tenn.:** "My son and I bought two **Deere** 4500 tractors and they're both worst buys. The seats on both tractors cracked and came apart from the seat frame, and the plastic engine cover grille and steering instrument housing cracked and fell apart. Also, the shift lever and gears came apart. I got no help from the dealer. The loader bucket on my son's tractor shakes the entire tractor to the point it pulls the bolts out of the frame. The engine works great, however, as do the hydraulics.

"We both bought **Deere** Gators, too, and they're also worst buys. The seats fell apart within a year."

**Joe Duffy, Hornell, New York (607 324-2971):** "Last issue FARM SHOW featured a company that recently started importing a line of pellet-making machines from China. My partner runs a sawmill so we bought a ma-



chine. We're in the initial stages of learning how to make pellets and we've had some problems. So far we've tried sawdust, wood shavings and wood chips, mixing them with water and other 'binders'. It's not as easy as promised and we're wondering if anyone else out there has some ideas for us. This machine is supposed to produce 600 lbs. of pellets per hour but we haven't come anywhere near that. So far we haven't tried plant material such as grass or cornstalks. The company tells us we need to get the right moisture content but they don't seem to be able to tell us what that is. Our machine has a good 15-hp diesel engine that's hand-cranked. It starts good. The company also has electric-start models. All the instructions that came with the machine are in Chinese.

"If anyone out there has any ideas on how to improve its performance, we're looking for help."

**Fred Lowry, Sr., Draper, Utah:** "My 2003 **Kubota** 30 hp tractor works great at my small horse training facility."

On the negative side, "My **Deere** 'quick switch' unit for hooking up to 3-pt. implements is my worst buy. It works great if the implement is perfectly level ground. However, it's almost impossible to use if the implement you're hooking up to is on uneven terrain."

**Michael Herson, Parkton, N.C.:** "I like my 1998 4-WD **Ford** Expedition equipped with a 5.4-liter engine. It's the best all-around vehicle I've ever owned. It can haul eight large 1,000-lb. bales with ease or pull our 28-ft. camper. It has a nice, comfortable ride for making day trips and plenty of room for passengers. At 204,000 miles it has had no major problems. It gets 15 1/2 to 17 1/2 mpg."