

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

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Mike Kirik, Union City, Penn.: "I replaced my Husqvarna Rancher chain saw with a **Poulan 330 Pro 22-in.** model. This saw came with a 3-year unlimited warranty. After using it a few times I noticed the bar wasn't getting any oil. I took it back and immediately received a new saw with no questions asked and no charge. I've cut at least 12 cords of wood with it with no problems."

"My 2002 **Husqvarna 55 Rancher 20-in.** chain saw is my worst buy. After retiring in 2002 I bought what I thought was a top-of-the-line chain saw. I hoped it would last the rest of my wood-cutting days. After reading the instructions, I mixed oil with gas at the recommended ratio and then proceeded to cut down a 42-in. soft maple tree. However, the saw kept losing power so I returned it to the dealer. They sent it to the manufacturer, who wouldn't honor the warranty. The company said the oil hadn't been mixed correctly - yet I've been using chain saws for more than 50 years."

"The manufacturer charged me \$145 to replace the piston, ring and cylinder. When it came back I had the same result - no power. This saw is now sitting under my work bench gathering dust."

Jim W. Harkness, Laingsburg, Mich.: "I bought an **Echo 3000 12-in.** chain saw to use in my tree trimming business. I thought if it lasted two seasons I'd be lucky. However, I've used this saw for six years now and it still runs great. It also starts easy. It's an amazing little saw and is my best buy."

Judd Rodman, Paonia, Colo.: Judd nominates his 2000 **MacDon 9200** swather as his "best buy". "This machine has cut about 3,000 acres of hay per year without any major problems."

"My **Deere 4430** tractor is my worst buy. The engine blew up, the transmission has gone out three times, and the hydraulics don't work right. Also, it uses four times more fuel than my International Harvester tractors do."

Richard Ross, Shelbyville, Ill.: "My 2000 **Troy-Bilt GTX20** riding mower equipped with a 20 hp Kohler engine is built heavy. It has hydraulic lift and hydraulic outlets and

"It has a lot of power and pulls anything I hook on behind it with ease."

has required only routine maintenance. It still runs and looks as good as new. A few years ago MTD purchased Troy-Bilt and dropped this tractor model, as well as a couple of others. Now they make lighter, poorer quality tractors."

Karla Tschoepe, Paonia, Colo.: Karla likes **SealLube** seal expander (New Tech International, Fraser, Mich. ph 800 434-9192; www.seallube.com). This product is said to stop rubber oil seal leaks in engines, transmissions, power steering and hydraulic systems. "I used it to stop a leak in the power steering on my backhoe. I put a SealLube in last year and the power steering is still working just fine with no leaks," says Karla.

"My 2005 **Chicago** variable speed reciprocating saw is my worst buy. I was able to use it for only about five minutes when the part that holds the blade broke, rendering the saw useless."

John Campbell, Bloomingdale, Ohio: "My 2005 **Kuhn 7-ft. 9-in.** disc mower is my best buy. It mows hay faster and cleaner than any other mower I've used and is reliable, requiring very little maintenance. I just drop it and mow."

David Thomas, Dale, N.Y.: A website called **Water Well Helpline** rates as David's "best buy" (www.fdungan.com/well.htm). "Our well water quit and couldn't be fixed. Having very limited resources, we went on the internet to look for help. We had no knowledge of well drilling, but by following the instructions online we were able to hand drill our own well. We now have more water than we can use."

The website describes how to drive a sandpoint well. It involves digging a 5-ft. deep hole at the site you've selected and filling it with water and letting it settle for a week, so that the ground becomes soft, and

Hal D. Stephens, Solomon, Kansas: A 2004 **Sears Craftsman 26 hp** riding mower rates as Hal's "best buy". "We have a hilly yard but this unit has power to spare and has required only routine maintenance. It cuts even and doesn't miss any grass between the blades."

On the "worst buy" side, he lists his 2005 **McCulloch EZ Pull** weedeater. "We used it only twice and then it wouldn't start. The company gave us another one which worked better, but at times it doesn't want to run, either. Most of the problem seems to be in the carburetor and the choke system. However, when this weedeater is running it does do a good job of cutting."

Justin Schafer, Portland, Ind.: "My **Geo-Thermal** heating and cooling system, which pulls heat from ground water, is about 35 percent more efficient than an air-to-air heat pump. We know because we've been keeping records for about 20 years. We're well pleased with it. The only negative is that it wastes good well water."

Wayne R. Wangsness, Decorah, Iowa: Wayne nominates his 2006 **Motorola** 'Razor' cell phone as his "worst buy". "As soon as I started using this phone I noticed that the reception was worse than it was on the cheap Nokia that I had been using. What good is a cell phone if you can't hear your calls?"

Grant England, Gales Creek, Oregon: "This is a small tractor, but it doesn't seem to know it," says Grant, pleased with his **Kubota L3400** equipped with a front-end loader and detachable backhoe. "I use this tractor to haul timber off a thinned-out hillside. Some of the logs are 3 ft. in diameter and 60 ft. long and are laying on slopes as steep as 45 degrees. The tractor may grunt a little, but it pulls these trees right out of there. It's set up with Hydra-steer which I really like."

On the "worst buy" side, he lists his **Warn** winch. "I use it with my 2005 **Kubota RTV** utility vehicle to pull smaller logs. The winch itself works fine. It's rated at 2,500 lbs. and has plenty of power, but the design of the guide rollers needs improvement. Even on a straight pull the wire doesn't track evenly across the spool. Instead, it piles up in one area and gets frayed."

B. Glenn Wells, Bostic, N.C.: He's enthusiastic about his 2004 **Cub Cadet** riding mower. "This riding mower is a Bush Hog wanna-be - I love it. It's equipped with a 24 hp Briggs & Stratton engine, a 50-in. deck, a smooth hydrostatic transmission, cruise control, and even a cup holder. I use it to keep four to six acres of grass looking like a golf course. No problems at all. I paid less than \$2,000 for it. My only complaint is that the dealer wanted \$30 to bring it to my place, which ticked me off. So I went to **Tractor Supply Co.** and bought a new utility trailer for \$620. "I'll show him," I thought, and I used the trailer to bring my new mower home."

"The trailer has turned out to be a best buy, too. I use it all the time. It's equipped with a rear fold-down ramp and bigger wheels than

other trailers I looked at. And, I saved the \$30 delivery fee!"

John L. Hillhouse, Jr., Birmingham, Ala.: "My 2005 **Kubota 2800 DT 4-WD** diesel tractor equipped with a front-end loader and backhoe attachment is my best buy. It's built with quality and starts right up in all but the very coldest weather without using glow plugs. Also, the engine runs quiet."

Warren Black, Owosso, Mich.: "My best buy is the **EasySet Mole Eliminator** mole trap (Bob Bruno, Nuisance Wildlife Control Products, Winona, Minn. ph 888 778-7988; www.easysetmoletrap.com). Whoever designed this trap did their homework. I bought 21 of them. The trap is set by stepping on it until the trigger pushes down onto the tunnel."

Arthur Timmel, Collins, N.Y.: "My 12-ft. **Bri-Mar** dump trailer is my best buy (Bri-Mar Mfg., Chambersburg, Penn. ph 800-732-5845 or 717 263-6116; www.bri-mar.com). "I pull this trailer behind my pickup. It's easy to pull and dump and requires very little maintenance. I like not having to buy insurance. It replaces an expensive dump truck."



Sam Peachey, McAlisterville, Penn.: "Subaru Robin engines are the easiest starting, quietest running, and most fuel efficient gas engines I've ever seen (Subaru Robin, Wood Dale, Ill. ph 800 277 6246 or 630 350-8200; www.robinamerica.com). However, the engines come with a cheap spark plug so if you buy them new be sure to also buy a good spark plug. If you do, these engines will run and run and run."

"My **Husqvarna 395** chain saw works great."

Mike Foppe, Silex, Mo.: Mike bought a used 2004 **GM Duramax 3500** pickup equipped with an Allison transmission. After three months and about 30,000 miles, he says it's his "best buy". "It's a nice truck with a lot of power for big trailers and on hills. My only complaint is that I wish it was more fuel efficient. It gets only about 13 mpg."

Robert Hopkins, Mardela, Md.: Robert's pleased with his 2005 **Land Pride 6-ft.** grooming mower. "This mower works great and has deck height adjustment wheels that are easy to adjust. It doesn't scalp the grass, and the rear discharge doesn't pile up the grass clippings."

John V. Anderson, Joliet, Ill.: "It has more than 400,000 miles on it but still doesn't use any oil," says John, happy with his 1986 **Dodge D250 3/4-ton 2-WD** pickup.

Garry Lentz, Dunmore, Alberta: Garry's

the satisfied owner of a 2006 **Speedtech Instruments** handheld digital thermometer and wind speed indicator. "It's lightweight, compact, and extremely accurate. The battery is still going strong after a full season of use."

"My 2005 **Thermor** home weather station is my worst buy. The receiver display unit was faulty from the start. A replacement unit came with a large black spot inside the screen that looked like a fungus. By the time the second replacement unit came, the wind had broken the outside wind sensor off. The batteries in the remote transmitter last only for a few days. The distributor promptly delivered replacement parts but they were also inferior quality."

Sheila Martin, Hepworth, Ontario: "We're happy with our 2002 **Kubota B2410** tractor. We're semi retired and use this tractor at a local cemetery. It maneuver great around headstones. We also use it to landscape around cottages. On the farm this tractor is used in the fields and woods and for moving snow during the winter. No problems."

Emery F. Olsen, Turtle Lake, N. Dak.: Emery's the satisfied owner of a 2004 **Dixon 42-in.** zero turn riding mower. "I bought it in 2005 as a hold-over mower. It replaced a 48-in. garden tractor-type mower. With this machine I can mow my lawn in half the time and do a nicer job of mowing. If anything happened to this mower, I'd definitely buy another one."

Pete Dickinson, Park Rapids, Minn.: "I use it hard, but it never lets me down," says Pete about his 2003 **Polaris 700** ATV. "I use tire chains with it for winter snow plowing and for pulling a fish house. It always starts right up and just keeps on going."

"My **Stihl 044** chain saw is a best buy. I've used it for many years. It requires very little maintenance, always starts right up and runs strong. It comes with hand warmers which I really like."

"I install **NAPA** alternators, window motors, starters, etc. for customers of our shop and almost always have to warranty them, or swap them for a different brand."

Belding F. Clearwater, Cornwall, N.Y.: "My **Deere Sabre** lawn tractor is my worst buy. I bought it for mowing my lawn and for towing a small 2-wheel cart. The transaxle broke and the replacement cost was only partly covered by the warranty, after much 'discussion' with the dealer. Also the frame broke just ahead of the drive wheels, and the deck is hard to remove. What a piece of junk."

Norman Harris, Acampo, Calif.: "I've been grinding hay mixed with molasses for more than 40 years using a **Miller** hay mill made in Turlock, Calif. It's my best buy. After the first four or five years the company came up with a 'Bale Buster' equipped with six sickle blades. The machine's four paddles have only been changed twice - after grinding 2,500 tons of alfalfa and oats hay. It's a great machine."

Gerald West, Trenton, Ohio: "We've been a **Chevy** family for generations and have always been happy with Chevrolet cars and trucks. Many of our trucks have logged more than 200,000 miles without requiring major repairs. The cars have been just as reliable. We're looking forward to the new-style Silverado pickup."

Joe Baldwin, Glencoe, Minn.: "It's powerful, yet quiet, and handles nimbly. So far it has been very reliable," says Joe, pleased with his 2004 **Honda Foreman 450 cc 4-WD** ATV. "I use it primarily for cutting, splitting and hauling firewood and to pull a 4 by 8-ft. trailer. It's well designed and easy to maintain. It has a motorcycle-type transmission and electric shift, and it uses thumb-operated buttons instead of belt-type variable clutches