

App Tracks Equipment Maintenance

“TractorPal is an app that does two things very well – it helps keep track of maintenance and it keeps track of inventory,” says Keith King, co-creator and owner of TractorPal, LLC.

Farmers with multiple tractors and pieces of equipment have access to all the information they need anytime via their Android or iPhone smartphone. The app sells for \$9.99.

The practical record-keeping tool is the brainchild of Keith King, who has a background in computers, marketing and agriculture, and Erik Schlimmer, a farmer, both of Volga, S. Dak. In 2013, King developed the app when Schlimmer asked if one was available.

“In this day and age it just makes sense to have the information you need with you at all times, and maintenance and inventory records are no different,” King says. “The user can list all of their machinery inventory and even utility vehicles and regular vehicles. They can include things like purchase date, VIN number, and purchase price. Then when it comes to maintenance the user can input things like part numbers, oil quantities, date of service and hours/odometer. If the user ever needs a printout there are pre-formatted reports, which can be emailed or printed right from your phone. It also tells you when it is time to do maintenance.”

All the information comes in handy when buying parts or passing records on when selling a piece of equipment.



“TractorPal” app helps you keep track of maintenance and inventory on all your equipment.

The information is secure on the phone, but Android phones also have a sync feature to store on secured servers in “the cloud.” Coy Yonce III, a new partner, is working on adding a sync feature for iPhones, allowing records to be updated on computer and other feature upgrades.

“Another feature we are working on is creating a custom TractorPal for companies or dealerships who want to give out this app to their customers. We will take TractorPal and ‘re-skin’ it with your company’s colors and logos,” King says, noting that the app can be tried for free before purchase.

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Teen Creates App For Calving Records

Keeping records on calves was much easier this spring for about 6,000 producers thanks to an app developed by Ellen Schlechter of Orient, S. Dak. At 17, she and her cousin, Xavier Schlechter, created the business, around her “The Calving Book” application for Android and iOS platforms. Data can be recorded right in the field on a smart phone or other electronic device.

Schlechter worked on the electronic tracking system for two years, with insight on what categories to include based on her experience growing up in a family that raises about 600 beef cows.

“Before, we just recorded information in a notebook, one for each of the two pastures,” Schlechter recalls. As the most tech savvy member of her family with the most time, she was asked to come up with a better system.

After finding a platform online, she customized it to fit the operation and set it up for multiple users. At the Schlechter ranch, family members check pastures in the morning and evening during calving season. They start a file for each newborn when it is tagged and vaccinated.

Stored in the cloud, the information can be exported to computers as PDF and Excel files.

“Instead of flipping through pages to find records for a calf, we can just do a search,” Schlechter says.

The app allows producers to customize fields of information they want to include beyond the basics of birthdate and gender, to color, sire/dam, udder grade, comments, etc.

Schlechter continually updates the app she first released in November 2014, based on producers’ suggestions and her family’s needs. She currently offers three versions.

Lite is a free, introductory version that only displays on the phone and doesn’t have search or export features.



“The Calving Book” app lets you record calving data right in the field on a smart phone or other electronic device.

Pro sells for a one-time fee of \$19.99 and has search and export features, divides records according to pasture or year, and has alerts.

With Plus, at \$25, producers can add records offline, and it includes fields for breeding, weaning and pregnancy checks.

All can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

While designed for beef or dairy, some customers have adapted the program for lambs and horses.

As her cousin introduces the app to producers at shows, Schlechter, a high school junior, is working on adding new features for more offline capabilities and for generating reports.

“This has kind of surprised me. I never saw myself going in this direction,” Schlechter says, adding she plans to major in business after she graduates from high school.

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For 30 years Marvin Baker has been restoring and making wooden windmills. Now he’s looking for a younger windmill enthusiast to take over his business.

Windmill Business Up For Sale

After 30 years of restoring and making wooden windmills, Marvin Baker doesn’t want to see the old art die. So, at 86, he hopes to find a younger windmill enthusiast to take over his business.

“I was a farmer, and when I retired and started working on windmills as a hobby,” he says, noting that a nephew who worked on windmills encouraged him.

Baker created patterns based on photos of windmill models (such as Dempster No. 3 and No. 4, and Baker L) used in Nebraska, that were working windmills providing water. He purchased Cyprus wood and cut it to create 1/4-in. thick blades, then figured out how to place ash wood pieces between the blades at the right angle to catch the wind, and finally bolt the sections together in perfect balance.

In the beginning, he installed his creations in his rural Pender, Neb., yard. They attracted attention and buyers. Many customers came from northeast Nebraska

and Northwest Iowa. Several of Baker’s windmills are in a collection in Jackson, Neb. Others preserve family heritage, like one Baker restored for a Sioux City, Iowa, customer.

Some of Baker’s windmills have shipped to other states including Texas and New Hampshire.

“They could be set up to pump water, but most windmills are for ornaments,” Baker says. He has painted them in a variety of colors at customers’ requests. The most popular combination is white blades with red tips. John Deere fans favor yellow and green.

Since the work is getting more difficult as he gets older, Baker says he has slowed down and plans to just finish current projects. He isn’t interested in new work, but would love to hear from anyone interested in buying and taking over the business.

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After he couldn’t find a pony cart on the market that he liked, Roger Holcomb decided to build his own. “Customers like my design and how sturdy they’re built,” he says.

Shop-Built Pony Carts Built To Last

After shopping for a pony cart, Roger Holcomb was less than impressed with the quality of what was on the market. A self-taught welder since he was 14, Holcomb built his own cart, never expecting it to go any farther than that.

“After a short time, I had people asking me to build one for them,” he notes. “I have sold several and even saw one in a parade. Customers like my design and how sturdy they are built.”

The 43-in. wide, 150-lb. carts are built out of 1 1/4-in. square tubing for the frame and expanded metal for the flooring. The seat is 3-in. foam covered with vinyl. He purchases

the shafts from an Amish family.

Holcomb offers two types of 20-in. tires. A pony cart with BMX wheels sells for \$600. A cart with solid rubber wheels sells for \$700. He paints the carts black with IH red accents on the fenders and eveners.

Located in Mentor, Minn., near busy Hwy. 2, most customers have been local but the carts can be shipped, Holcomb says. “The material in them is strong enough to last a long time after I’m gone,” he says.

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