

Best & Worst Buys

(Continued on next page)

N.E., Rochester, Minn. 55904).

Alfred Kaschube, Brockton, Mont.: His 1987 1980 White 2-135 tractor heads his "best buy" list. "No problems. It rides smooth and has good power."

Alfred also likes his 1987 Chevrolet Celebrity. "It gets 31 mpg, is comfortable to drive and the V-6 engine works great."

Dennis Matthews, Corunna, Mich.: "My best buy ever is an International 1440 Axial Flow combine. It's simple to service and does a great job. Well worth the money."

"I also like my two International 2 plus 2 tractors, models 6388 and 6588. They turn shorter and handle their weight better than a front-wheel assist tractor, yet they aren't cumbersome like a regular 4-WD. Too bad they quit making them."

On the "worst buy" side, "Our Behlen grain bins leak water around the edges. There's always spoilage and the grain always comes out wetter than when I put it in. Our dealer tried to help, but the problem is the design. The roof has no overhang so all the rain runs right down the side of the bin. We're disgusted but once they're assembled, what can you do?"

Orel Sands, Keldron, S. Dak.: "The best buy I've ever made is a 1988 Chevrolet Silverado pickup with a 350 fuel-injected engine. It's easy riding and I get 20 mpg."

Dean Stormer, Bridgewater, Iowa: "I like my 1985 Wheatley 3-pt. big bale mover (Wheatley Mfg., Cumberland, Iowa). A slot in the top link makes it easy to hook up. It's built heavy - the two lower prongs are solid 2-in. shafts. You can either go under the bales or spear them."

Lon Stretesky, Big Springs, Neb.: Lon likes his Deere 4650 tractor. "It's easy to hook up the hydraulic hoses. I also like the powershift, but the tractor could use more low-rpm power. Running under 1,800 rpm's it's easy to kill the motor."

He's also pleased with his Yamaha Big Bear 4-WD 4-wheeler ATV. "This is a really great machine. We use it for all sorts of chores - pulling augers, pipe trailers, chasing cattle, etc. We even made a bolt-on rack to carry calves. It's made from a 10-in. dia. piece of steel pipe that's split lengthwise and then spread out to fit the body of the calf. There is a yoke at one end for the calf's neck and we stretch a tarp strap across the neck to hold the calf in place."

Frank Vanek, Moore, Mont.: "It saves time doing chores with cattle and sheep, and also gets me back and forth quickly when doing fieldwork," says Frank about his 1985 Honda 200 4-wheeler. "I may get another one for my wife."

Raymond Rumpf, Ottawa, Kan.: "My worst buy is a 1986 Deere 4425 combine. Deere mislabeled this combine. It should have been labeled the "Grinder-Mixer". I grow soybeans for seed production, and the combine ground up 35% of my 1987 soybean crop. The seed company rejected the seed, and it cost me thousands of dollars. Deere doesn't know how to solve the problem."

Raymond says his 1987 Case-IH 1620 Axial Flow combine is his "best buy". "It has great capacity, is quiet, easy to operate, and produces a super grain sample."

Wilbert Hauser, Aitkin, Minn.: "It gives me a headache every time I drive it," says

Wilbert about his 1987 Ford Econoline van. "I've had four Ford vans before and was pleased with all of them. The V-8 engine uses three quarts of oil in 3,000 miles. There's lots of wind noise and it clunks when it goes into overdrive. I've had it back to the dealer twice and they said the wind noise was normal. It also has a poor heating and air-conditioning system. Passengers riding in the rear seat freeze in the summer and sweat in the summer. When you shell

"There's lots of wind noise and it clunks when it goes into overdrive."

out \$23,000 for a vehicle, you shouldn't have to put up with such uncomfortable and annoying conditions."

James Leonard, Waunakee, Wis.: His "best buy" is a 1988 Case-IH 8520 baler. "It straddles the windrows, ties good square bales and distributes leaves evenly throughout the bale."

David Cook, Nemaha, Iowa: He nominates his 1988 Chevrolet K2500 4-WD pickup, equipped with the Silverado package, as his "best buy". "I'm happy with the power of the fuel injected 350 cu. in. engine. We usually get 14 to 16 mpg carrying a heavy load. The transmission shifts smoothly and the ride is good for a heavy duty truck. It also has an excellent sound system."

Clair Moore, Dolliver, Iowa: He ranks his Deere 316 mower as a "worst buy". "I've installed two drive belts in the first two months of use. The front belt tightener broke completely off. Also, the motor spits and dies for no apparent reason."

On the plus side, "My 9-ft. Artsway disk plow chops, disks and plows in one operation and leaves enough residue on top to keep soil from eroding."

Tom Henry, Westhope, N. Dak.: He nominates a 1988 Bourgault 536 42-ft. multi-purpose cultivator as his "best buy". "It follows the ground exceptionally well, has good flotation and trash clearance, and the shanks stay in the ground."

Kevin Ryersee, Pelee Island, Ontario: "It gets great mileage and its 6-cylinder engine delivers more power than I ever expected," says Kevin, owner of a 1986 Ford F-150 pickup. "It also feels more sturdy than other pickups I've driven."

On the negative side, "My Skil cordless screwdriver lacks the power to turn screws into anything but styrofoam."

Harold Smage, Elkhorn, Wis.: "My best buy is a 12-row International 800 Early Riser rear-fold planter. It plants good stands with fast, uniform emergence. Having only two seed hoppers to fill saves a lot of time and effort. One bad point is that stones caught by the covering disks plug the openers. Offset disk coverers don't cure the problem."

Steve Farmer, Charles City, Iowa: "I've never used a cultivator that takes out weeds the way this one does," says Steve, pleased with his 6-row 30-in. Glencoe ridge till cultivator. "It's a well built, quality product. Herbicide savings will pay for it in two or three years."

"IT'S ALWAYS IN THE SHOP"

Kansas Farmer Fights To Return "Lemon" Combine

By Frank Buchman

Emmet Wichman of Valley Falls, Kan., bought a new 1987 Deere 7720 last year. He says it's been in the shop 1 1/2 hrs. for every hour it's been in the field.

"I paid over \$106,000 for this combine, without any headers or platforms, and it's been out of order ever since I got it home," Wichman says. "We've had unbelievable problems. One of the wheels broke off, the main drive shaft broke, the unloading auger twisted apart damaging the grain tank, which had to be replaced, the O-rings failed, the radio and air conditioning failed, and the cab was not sealed. Just about everything that could possibly go wrong with a combine went wrong on this machine," says Wichman.

The dealer who sold Wichman the combine has been obliging about the problems and has made all of the repairs under Deere's warranty at no charge to Wichman.

"It's a very unfortunate situation, but we got Emmett right back into the field as quickly as possible. He got all of his grain cut," says Martin Caldwell at Caldwell, Inc., in Topeka, Kan., who pointed out that combines are the most complex implement used on the farm.

He added that any new combine has more problems than other machinery. "The broken axle weld must have been caused by a defective weld; and the shaft breaking was a freak thing and may also have also been caused by a poor weld," Caldwell says. He considered the other problems, such as the radio quitting and the air conditioner breaking down, as only minor.

Wichman says, "My Deere dealer has been completely cooperative. They have over \$20,000 invested in labor and repairs, but the problems have never ceased. This combine is just a lemon."

Whenever a problem comes up on the machine, Caldwell says he contacts factory officials before starting the repairs. "They say fix the combine right and make the farmer happy. Deere is proud of its warranty and stands behind it completely," he emphasized.

Pointing out that he isn't hard on machinery or prejudiced against the company, Wichman says, "I run all of my equipment myself and do most of the repairs myself. I have a 5-year old Deere 8650 tractor that is a fine piece of equipment."

Caldwell adds, "Emmett is a good farmer; he does a fine job taking care of his machinery."

However, Wichman has had major problems with other equipment in the past, and there have been lawsuits before the situations were settled. "I had problems with a Case tractor, but it wasn't as bad as this combine. I also had a Chevy pickup that wouldn't stop vibrating. GM bought it back and that was before Kansas had a lemon law for cars and pickups," he says.

"When I spend this kind of money on a new piece of equipment, I expect it to work. If it doesn't I'm going to see that it's made right," Wichman says. "I farm 900 acres by myself which is why I buy new equipment. I don't have time for broken down machinery."

Wichman thinks Deere should give him a

new combine. "They will keep repairing this one, but that's as far as it goes," he says. "They'd sell me a new one now for \$15,000 difference but I'd be better off hiring someone to harvest my 800 acres than to do that."

When he contacted the state attorney general, Wichman was told there was nothing that could be done as long as the company continued to repair the combine.

However, he went beyond that reply. "I found out through my lawyer that there is a law in Kansas that protects farmers in situations like this. It states that if a piece of farm equipment doesn't do what it's supposed to do, the purchaser can revoke acceptance of that machine."

His attorney set up an appointment with Deere's lawyer to discuss replacement of the combine, but several appointments have been cancelled. "I'm just getting the run-around," he says.

Tim Harrington, Deere's attorney at the Moline, Ill., admitted that there have been meeting conflicts.

Deere officials have agreed to extend the one-year warranty on the combine for another year, but Wichman says he's certain the problems will continue and he doesn't want to have to cope with continuous breakdowns.

Caldwell says Deere factory officials are concerned about the key part failures on Wichman's machine and want to know about them right away to prevent any such problems in the future.

No reason has been given by factory or local officials to explain the problems Wichman has had with his combine. Wichman notes, however, that the machine was built right after Deere employees ended a work strike.

A lawsuit would cost Wichman at least \$10,000. "Deere knows that so they're holding off. I don't know what I'm going to do yet, but if they don't come through soon, I will have to file suit," he says.

Deere is also in a difficult situation, Caldwell pointed out. "They are proud of their warranty and will stand behind the equipment they sell. But if they replaced the combine with a new one, other farmers would want their machines replaced," he says.

Editor's Note: Since late July when this story appeared in Grass & Grain, Manhattan, Kan., Wichman's Deere dealer made a "settlement offer" which he accepted. In effect, Deere took Wichman's year-old 7720 combine in trade for a new 1988 model. "It's not what I wanted. I wanted my money back but this is the best I could get and I'm satisfied I did all I could," he told FARM SHOW, adding that the lesson to be learned from his experience is that you have to be motivated to get results from big companies when you end up with a "lemon" product. "You have to be persistent and talk to everyone you can. Make a lot of noise."

"One thing I'll say about Deere is that they fixed all my problems at no cost and they fixed them right. When they replaced the broken axle they also replaced the final drive in case that had also been damaged. They replaced all parts that might have been defective but there was just too much wrong with this combine to repair. Despite all the trouble I had with the machine, however, I didn't get a response from the company until I contacted local newspapers and the attorney general's office."