

BUYING TIPS YOU CAN USE

Randomly selected farmers "tell it like it is" in nominating their "best" and "worst" buys.

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Farmers Nominate Best, Worst Buys

OPINION

Alton Lerwick, Lyman, Neb.: "My worst buy is my 1990 Ford F-350 4-WD pickup equipped with a 7.3-liter diesel engine. It has 58,000 miles on it. The trouble began when the clutch went out at about 20,000 miles. The company said that was 'normal wear and tear' and wouldn't cover it under their 60,000 mile drivetrain warranty. Since then the clutch has gone out again, the clutch master cylinder has been replaced twice, and the power steering has been repaired three times. It's gone through three starters, four alternators, and five sets of batteries and the transfer case has been rebuilt three times. The rear seals leaked and ruined the rear brakes. The radiator fins are so close together that nothing can pass through them. As a result, the screen plugs up and has to be removed and cleaned on a regular basis. The pickup frame broke on one side and now paint is peeling off the hood. I'm a real skeptic whenever I see Fords advertised as 'Ford tough.'

"My Deere 535 round baler is reliable. The bales start easy and are solid."

Robert Frantz, Warsaw, Ind.: Robert's disappointed with "H Blades" made by Tri-H Corp., Hennessey, Okla. The blade is designed to be used in place of standard mower blades on any mower deck or big

only about 1 ft. long.

"The tractor starts better in cold weather than any other diesel tractor I've ever had. It has a glow plug for starting in cold weather, but I don't even have to use it unless the temperature drops below 12 to 15 degrees. One problem is that the gap between third and fourth gear is too wide. In third gear it goes 1.9 mph and in fourth gear 3.8 mph. Also, the tractor's top speed is only 8 to 9 mph. Small, wide turf tires on the tractor reduce speed about 14% compared to conventional tires, but even so it should go faster."

James Hagedorn, Viola, Idaho: "We're proud of our 1994 5-shank subsoiler made by Custom Ag Equipment which we first read about in Farm Show. We've used it on hard, dry ground and also on wet soil. The shanks do a good job of fracturing the ground yet hardly disturb the topsoil. Residue remains on top of the ground, allowing moisture to percolate downward."

Don Horne, Jr., Doerun, Ga.: Don's the owner of a 1995 Deere 7400 front wheel assist tractor. "It handles well and is a pleasure to drive. It has a great transmission and a roomy, comfortable cab that's easy to enter. It also has a lot of power for its 100 hp rating."

Verle Johnson, Marseilles, Ill.: Verle says the Farmall M he bought used in 1948 the year he was married, has been his "best buy" over the years. "It's been in the field every year since I bought it. I could write a book on the experiences I've had with it."

Bill Irwin, Glade Valley, N.C.: Bill's had trouble with Ondura roofing. "I used it on a 50 by 100-ft. building that I put up 10 years ago. It's supposed to 'last a lifetime', but the south side of the roof is already shot. I can stick my finger through it anywhere."

Tom Merrigan, Vermillion, S. Dak.: A 1991 Case-IH 7120 front wheel assist tractor rates as Tom's "best buy". "It's been a lifesaver during the wet springs we've had in two of the last three years. It has a lot of power and traction so we can stay out of trouble in wet fields. It's easy on fuel and can do any task on our farm. We wouldn't farm without it."

David Westerland, Osco, Ill.: David's "well satisfied" with the Ford Ranger pickups he's bought over the years. "I've owned 1986, 1988, 1989, and 1990 XLT models, all equipped with 4-cyl., 2.3-liter gas engines, and I can't fault any of them. Other than routine maintenance I've spent only about \$50 on repairs over the last 10 years. They're easy on fuel and have quiet cabs. They also have better resale value than competitive models."

Eldon Miller, Adrian, Mich.: "My best buy of all time is my 1959 Ford 981 Select O Matic tractor which I bought used. I've never had any trouble with it. I made two snow blades for it which the tractor handles with ease. It's an easy tractor to service."

"My worst buy is my 1993 Mighty Mig Mig-Mate wire welder. I can't make a continuous weld with it or make spot welds without 'bird nesting' the wire. The problem is that the wire always feeds out at the same rate regardless of the heat setting. As a result I spend more time unraveling the wire than I do welding. My next welder will be a Century or Lincoln."

Gerard Hickey, Lethbridge, Alberta: Gerard's had good luck with his 1988 GM SLE pickup. "It has well over 100,000 miles with no repairs to the engine or transmission, and the body is still in good shape with no rust. It drives comfortably and gets 29.9 mpg. The only problem is that when I shift

rotary mower. The heavy-built blades have notches cut out of each end to give them a more aggressive cut than straight-across blades. There are also angled "flanges" on the back side of each end of the blade which are designed to create increased turbulence under the deck to keep grass from building up.

"I sent a check for \$26.25 to the company last January which was cashed. However, I still haven't received the blade. In mid March I wrote a letter to them asking when we could expect to receive the blade. No answer. A couple weeks later I called them and was told the blade would be on its way in two to three weeks. Still no blade. In May I again called the company and left a message on their answering machine. I told them this was the second time I'd called about the blade and that I'd appreciate hearing from them. They didn't return my call. A couple days later I filed a claim with the Better Business Bureau in Oklahoma City. I wonder how many other people have ordered blades from the company and lost their money."

Linwood Thompson, Tenants Harbor, Maine: Overall, Linwood's pleased with his 1981 Deere 1070 35 hp diesel tractor. However, when a crack developed in a power steering hose he found it was expensive to replace. "I bought a replacement hose for \$12 at an auto supply store, but it wasn't metric so I couldn't use it. I ended up having to pay my Deere dealer \$53 for the hose which I think is way too much. The hose is