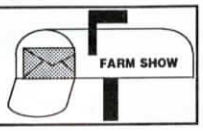
Reader Letters



Two items in your last issue (Vol. 18, No. 3) caught my eye. One was an "Owner's Report" on Belarus tractors and the other was your a request for farmers to send information on "Longest Running Tractor Without An Engine Overhaul". I was interested because I own 7 Belarus tractors, one of which is a 55-hp. 550 that I bought new in 1977 for $9,900. It now has 13,766 hrs. on it and I've never opened up the engine. It's been a good tractor, for the price, but I've had some problems with my Belarus equipment over the years.

I keep two or three "junker" Belarus tractors just for parts. For example, I recently bought a 4-WD tractor that wouldn't run for $750. Belarus parts are expensive and the company won't break parts down. If a seal goes out on a component, you often have to buy a whole new unit. You can't just buy the seal. That's a lot different from domestic manufacturers who'd be happy to sell you the "scream off a saw" if you asked them. So when I can, I pick up used tractors so I've got my own parts. Sometimes parts are mixed up. Like the time I took a clutch apart and it had three fingers in there - two of one kind and one of another.

One problem with nearly all my Belarus tractors is that they run hot. I've never been able to solve the problem. Also, they're generally hard to start. I've had good luck replacing the single 12-volt battery with two 12-volt batteries hooked up in series. Gives double the cranking power. These tractors also ride rough and run loud. But for the price, I'm willing to put up with the inconvenience. My only suggestion: If you're going to buy a Belarus, you'd better be a darn good mechanic. ***(Richard Scarff, Rt. 1, Brashear, Mo. 63533 ph 816 323-5685)***

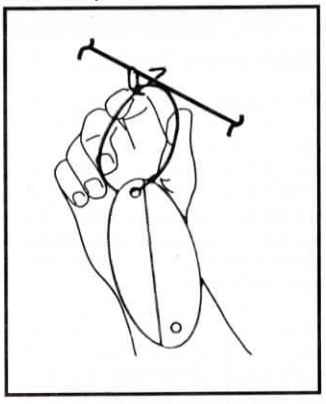
I have a 1973 IHC 666 diesel that had 11,120 hrs. on it before I overhauled it. I spent less than $2,000 to overhaul the motor and fuel pump. ***(Al Rens, 3145 300th St., Hull, Iowa 51239)***

I have a model 7000 Ford tractor that I bought new in 1974. It's a turbocharged 4-cylinder with 85 to 90 hp. It just turned 7,625 hrs. and the engine has never been touched, not even the valve covers. The only thing we've worked on are the injectors. We use it every day to grind feed and do other odd jobs. ***(Larry Striegel, Rt. 1, Box 71, Harper, Iowa 52231)***

My candidate for longest running tractor without an engine overhaul is a 1966 IHC 806 diesel. This tractor has 9,000 hrs. on it and uses no more oil than it did the first year we had it. The motor has never been touched. I plow snow with the tractor - starts easily even at 30 below zero - and I seeded 500 acres with it this spring. Runs as good as new. ***(David Tweedie, Box 97, Macrorie, Sask. S0L 2E0)***

Many years ago I bought a 1968 IHC 656 diesel Farmall tractor at a local farm auction that had run less than 2,000 hrs. with no overhaul of any kind. Since then I've had to replace several sets of tires and batteries, two or three glow-plugs, one water pump, and one main drive clutch. That's all. We change oil every 100 hrs. and the oil filter every 200 hrs. I sold the tractor to my son Mark 5 years ago when he took over the farm. I still go out to the farm to tinker around so I still get to use the IHC 656 quite often. The other day, while attaching a 4-row front-mount cultivator, I noticed the tachometer showed 949 hrs. Since it had turned over at 10,000 hrs., that means there's a total of 10,949 hrs. The tractor still has not had anything done to the valves, rings, pistons, crankshaft, or anything else inside the motor, although my son had to replace the diesel injector pump last year. This tractor still runs smooth - for a diesel. It'll use a quart of oil in 100 hrs. if doing hard work, like disking. Uses practically no oil in light work like cultivating or pulling a corn planter.

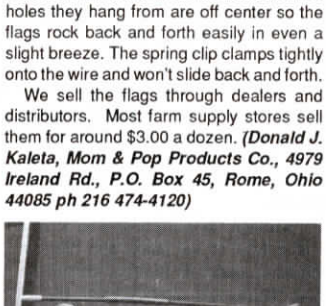
This IHC 656 has certainly served us well. ***(James T. Meyer, P.O. Box 55, Orchard, Neb. 68764)***



After years of tying ribbons and other paraphernalia onto electric fence wire to make it easier for livestock to spot, we finally came up with the idea for "Fence Flags", a highly visible clip-on plastic tag that's easy to install and stays put thanks to a patented stainless steel spring clip. We raise purebred Simmental beef and had trouble with animals going right through the fence when they couldn't see it.

The oval-shaped white flags are 5 by 3 in. and have a 90° bend in the middle that makes them visible from all directions. The holes they hang from are off center so the flags rock back and forth easily in even a slight breeze. The spring clip clamps tightly onto the wire and won't slide back and forth.

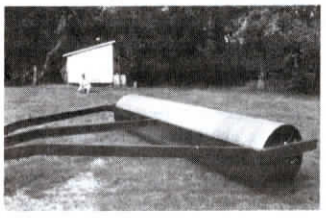
We sell the flags through dealers and distributors. Most farm supply stores sell them for around $3.00 a dozen. ***(Donald J. Kaleta, Mom & Pop Products Co., 4979 Ireland Rd., P.O. Box 45, Rome, Ohio 44085 ph 216 474-4120)***



I had trouble with the bale thrower control lever on my Deere square baler. It interfered with the roll bar on my tractor, especially when making turns with the baler tongue in the transport position. After breaking and bending the control handle several times, I finally found a simple solution. I cut the ends off a heavy-duty spring that has the same inner diameter as the control handle tube's outer diameter. I then removed a section of the handle and inserted the cut ends into each end of the spring. I welded the spring to the tube so the control handle is still the same length as it was before.

The spring is stiff enough to support the handle and allow thrower adjustment, but flexes out of the way if it comes against lights, fender, or roll guard of the tractor. This idea might work good on other similar control levers. ***(Jere W. Grube, 647 Champ Blvd., Manheim, Penn. 17545 ph 717 898-7849)***

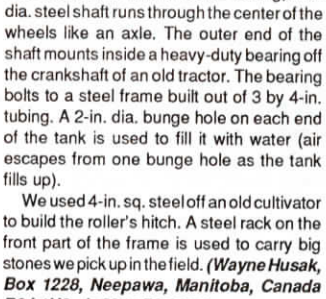
I built this 4-row cultivator over 25 years ago and it's worked great all these years. I built it using a pair of old 2-row cultivators - an Allis Chalmers and a Case. I also fitted it with 3 plow coulters (to help hold it on the row) and a pair of gauge wheels from a junkyard (one mounts at either end). It can be easily narrowed up from 30 to 24-in. rows. I'm sure a lot of farmers could still put their own units together today from miscellaneous parts rather than going out and paying a fortune for new equipment. ***(Alvin Van Den Brink, 6740 120th Ave., Fennville, Mich. 49408 ph 616 543-4403)***



My father and I came up with an inexpensive way to make our own land roller using a large air compressor tank. We bought a 10-ft. long, 36-in. dia. air compressor tank at an auction and converted it into a 14 ft. long land roller that can be filled with water for extra weight. We pull it behind a small Allis-Chalmers tractor.

It buries stones up to 5 in. in diameter, preventing damage to swather guards and knives during harvest of small grains and lentils. We spent less than $1,000 to build it. We lengthened the tank by welding together three 36-in. dia. steel wheels off an old threshing machine and then welding them onto each end of the tank. A 2-ft. long, 2-in. dia. steel shaft runs through the center of the wheels like an axle. The outer end of the shaft mounts inside a heavy-duty bearing off the crankshaft of an old tractor. The bearing bolts to a steel frame built out of 3 by 4-in. tubing. A 2-in. dia. bunge hole on each end of the tank is used to fill it with water (air escapes from one bunge hole as the tank fills up).

We used 4-in. sq. steel off an old cultivator to build the roller's hitch. A steel rack on the front part of the frame is used to carry big stones we pick up in the field. ***(Wayne Husak, Box 1228, Neepawa, Manitoba, Canada R0J 1H0 ph 204 476-3868)***



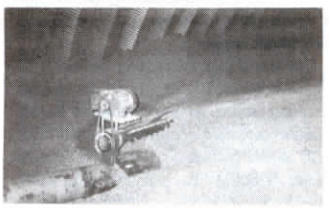
We used an old industrial-sized rubber earthmover tire to build a "quik-tach" tire scraper that mounts on the bucket of a skidsteer loader. We cut the 24-ply, 6-ft. high tire into four equally sized C-shaped sections and used one of the sections. We used angle iron and steel tubing to build a frame that bolts on top of the tire. The lip of the bucket slips between the angle iron and steel tubing, and a chain mounted on the back side of the frame secures the scraper to a hole in the top of the bucket. A chain tightener keeps the scraper rigid.

It really works good. We can hook it up in only 30 seconds and it cost less than $50 to make it. Commercial tire scrapers sell for over $500 and aren't as handy because you have to bolt them to the bucket or to a bracket, or to the 3-pt. hitch. The rubber cleans like a squeegee and does a better job than a bucket. It's 2 ft. wider than the bucket and is 'cupped' so it can scrape much more manure.

Cutting the tire was quite a job. We used a grinder to cut the bead off both sides of the tire. We chained the tire between two tractors to stretch it, then used a utility knife to cut it in half. We drilled a pair of holes opposite each other on top of the tire, then hooked a chain between the bolt and each tractor. We used chain tighteners to stretch the tire as we cut it. Once the tire was cut in half, we set it upright with the lugs on the ground so that we could cut it in half lengthwise through the lugs. We used a sheet of plywood and chalk to mark the center of the tire. Then we again stretched the tire between two tractors. We used a skil saw to cut 1/4 in. deep along the chalk mark so that we'd be sure to cut straight.

The frame that supports the tire to a steel plate bolts onto the top of the tire in four places. Large washers inside the tire keep the bolts from pulling through.

We tried using a skil saw and chain saw to cut the tire, but it didn't work because the 24-ply rubber is so thick. This idea won't work with rear tractor tires because they're too small and the sidewalls too flexible. The weight of manure would cause the tire to flip over backward. The tire we used weighs 700 to 800 lbs. and has thick sidewalls that give it a lot of support. Tire companies that handle industrial scraper or earthmover tires are usually glad to give them away. ***(Gene Vaske, Rt. 2, Box 35, Masonville, Iowa 50654 ph 319 932-2132)***



We used to load grain out of flat storage with a Bobcat bucket, which damaged a lot of grain so we modified a bin-type sweep auger to mount at the base of a 62-ft. auger. Now we can fill two semis with one 180° sweep of the 15-ft. auger without moving the 62-ft. auger. We've eliminated grain damage and it's a lot less work. The auger swings slick. You could make one of these up with any piece of auger flighting. We used a bin-sweep auger because we already had one. We didn't modify the sweep auger at all and still use it in our 30-ft. bin.

The sweep auger is belt-driven with a 1/2-hp. electric motor that mounts on a bracket at the base of the main auger. To make a pivot point for the swing auger, we bent a piece of heavy strap iron into a "U" shape - with holes drilled through the ends of the "U" - and welded it to the base of the main auger. Then we welded a pin under the motor end of the sweep auger that fits into the holes on the U-bracket. ***(Gary Speckman, W2402 Preston Rd., Juda, Wis. 53550 ph 608 934-5418)***

I built this tractor-mounted bean rider using iron salvaged from a 14-ft. IH No. 37 tandem disk. The beam on which the seats are mounted was made from the four disk gang beams. I welded the two shorter ones together to make the center section. The outer wings are each held in place by a single 3/4-in bolt and they fold forward for road travel. A small pin holds them in place for field work. The wings can be easily removed if only the two center seats are needed.