

Reader Letters

I wish someone would come out with some good information on tractors, especially year of manufacture, horsepower, the price it sold new for, and key features which individual tractors had, or didn't have. This type of information would help farmers a great deal in their buying of a good used tractor and it should include whether a tractor has a 3 pt. hookup. For example, it would note that the Ford 3 pt plow would fit the Case, but the Case won't fit the Ford. The small Ford arms will go into the Case. However, the large Case plow arms won't go into the smaller Ford arms.

O. Riglo
Daggett, Miss.

Editor's Note: FARM SHOW asked Pierce Fulkerson, implement dealer, tractor expert and author of several books on tractor comparisons, to comment on the points raised in reader Riglo's letter. Here's his answer, along with a wagonload of tips on what to look for when shopping for a used tractor.

First, we do have a book that shows the horsepower, years the tractors were built, fuel type, unballasted weight and standard tire sizes. Called the "Farmers & Tire Dealers Guide", it covers over 800 versions of some 500 models sold in the past 42-years. It's a "shirt-pocket" size book that sells for \$2.00 per copy and is revised annually to keep up with new models. In addition, "Redbook", printed by Implement & Tractor, provides the actual serial numbers and years in which tractors were built and lists models back to about 1940.

The "Official Guide", published by the National Farm & Power Equipment Dealers Association, also shows the serial numbers, years built and the "suggested retail prices" of tractors sold during the past 20-25 year period. Their "suggested retail price" data is gathered from surveys of dealers recording average prices they're getting for the various models. It also shows the latest published F.O.B. "suggested list prices" as well.

There is also a "Bluebook" which lists serial numbers, dates of models and "suggested" retail prices. Many dealers use the "Southwest Equipment Exchange" guide which shows used tractor models the dealers have in stock, their asking price for each model and their "taking" price.

In 98% of the cases, the dealer should be able to check the serial number of used tractors and tell you when they were built. The only exceptions would be where there are no serial numbers left on the tractor, or no listing is given to the publications which carry such data.

As dealers, we pay more attention to the condition of the individual model than to the year it was built. A given tractor that is 12 years old, for example, may have 7,000 hours on it and another tractor of the same model number and year may have only 2,000 hours. Consequently, wear and condition is what influences most of us more so than the year it was built.

In choosing your used tractor, you should also choose one which adapts to your own work applications. For example I have known of 8N Fords which ran for many years without overhaul

when subjected to light loads, and I have known of them being overhauled every season when subjected to heavy plowing or disking loads. The old WD or WD-45 Allis could drag the heavy loads and still render long engine life. So, while in my opinion the 8N's were much more versatile, the WD and WD-45 units were much more rugged and better suited to sustain heavy loads.

I take little stock in brand names of tractors. A tractor, like a man, makes it's own name on the used market. If it is versatile and reliable, it sells well and develops a reputation for so doing. Every manufacturer has made good tractors, as well as some they wish they hadn't built. Having a good dealer in your own area where you can get parts and service is very important. Some tractors sell for more in given areas than others because the farmer knows service is available. When you can't get parts and service, the price of the tractors drops. You can find good and bad in every used tractor.

Pierce Fulkerson
Sonora, Ky.

Here's a listing of books on farm tractors and the addresses of the publishers:

"Farmer and Tire Dealers Guide". A listing of the range of years in which tractors were built, maximum PTO hp., fuel type, unballasted weight and tire sizes of some 800 versions of 500 models since 1938. Costs \$2 per copy.

Contact: Tractor Comparisons, Box 117, Sonora, Ky. 42776

"Tractor Comparisons — 1978". A side by side listing of all competitive tractor models marketed in the U.S. in 1978. Costs \$5 per 8½ x 11 copy.

Contact: Tractor Comparisons, Box 117, Sonora, Ky. 42776

"Understanding the Modern Farm Tractor". Written in layman's language, this book explains engines, transmissions, PTO's, lugging power and all the working units of modern farm tractors. Costs \$5 per 8½ x 11 copy.

Contact: Tractor Comparisons, Box 117, Sonora, Ky. 42776.

"Official Guide — Tractors and Farm Equipment". Includes serial numbers, suggested list prices and used prices of tractors, combines and various other equipment. Costs \$35.

Contact: Farm Equipment Dealers Association, 10877 Watson Road, St. Louis, Mo. 63127.

"RED BOOK, By Implement and Tractor". Contains serial numbers and specifications of most farm equipment sold today, including tractors and combines. Costs \$4.

Contact: Intertech Publishing Corp., 9221 Quivira Road, Overland Park, Kan. 66212.

"Implement and Tractor Shop Manuals". Priced individually, or by the set. Covers most service specifications of farm tractors sold in this country.

Contact: Intertech Publishing Corp., 9221 Quivira Road, Overland Park, Kan. 66212.

"Nebraska Test Report". Copies available of all test reports of models tested at the "Nebraska Test" dating back to 1920. Relates all performance data. Costs \$3.50 for a year's subscription, or individual copies are available at 15¢ per copy, plus mailing costs. Booklets of individual one-year tests are available for \$1.

Contact: Tractor Test Laboratory, University of Nebraska, East Campus, Lincoln, Neb. 68583.

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