

"Owners Report" On Best, Worst Combines

Are you satisfied with the performance of your combine? How could it be improved? Have you modified your combine in any way to improve it in terms of grain damage, field loss, plugging, handling, cab, controls, etc.?

These are some of the questions we asked randomly-selected owners in an effort to highlight those combines that perform with flying colors, and to pinpoint the "lemons" that fail because of poor performance, or failure of the dealer or company to provide service.

Here's how the survey shaped up.

"I think this combine was built on a Monday when everyone had a hangover," says Michael G. Bohan, Humboldt, Iowa about his 1982 Massey Ferguson 850 combine. "The first three years it was a real lemon. The main drive tire always leaked, the radiator had to be pulled, the engine intercooler was fixed three times, it had all kinds of oil leaks, the engine used oil, it had two broken valves on the fuel injector pump, and we're already on our 4th hydrostatic drive cable. Our cornhead was also a nightmare the first few years. We went through lots of gathering chains and also broke a main drive shaft. Now, after 4 grain harvests, we're finally having fewer problems. I think this may be our last Massey combine."

"I'm extremely happy with the reliability and performance of our 1978 Deere 6600 combine. We bought it last year with 2,100 hrs. on it. It ran 800 acres last fall with the only downtime resulting from a failed water pump. Really like the hydrostatic transmission and the fuel economy. Controls are convenient, cab visibility is good, and it does an excellent job of cleaning. The dealer-installed Herschel Tiger Jaws cutterbar (1301 N. 14th St., Indianola, Iowa 50125, ph 515 961-7481) really helps performance of this combine," says Romaine A. Schweer, Denver, Iowa.

Steve Thiel, Kramer, N. Dak., owns a 1980 International 1480. "It needs more airflow through the sieves for better cleaning and capacity. We installed an air foil chaffer, made by B & D Manufacturing (Box 222, Craik, Sask. Canada, ph 306 734-5182), in place of the top sieve. We also installed a precision bored concave from the company. These modifications really helped performance."

"We've had very little downtime with our 1981 Deere 8820. It's convenient to service and we get good dealer service. There could be a few improvements, however. It needs a larger fuel tank, they should move the operating controls to the side of the seat, and it should have a smaller steering wheel console with another movable joint halfway up the console for better positioning of steering wheel. It could also use a smaller hopper screen so that rapeseed wouldn't leak out, a table height indicator in the cab, fan speed adjustment in cab, they could raise the air cleaner pre-cleaner to the top edge of hopper, and make the alternator so it'll withstand heat and dust better. They should also make the ladder and landing of expanded or some other similar open material so that chaff and dust will fall through and not get tracked into the cab. We made our own modifications to solve most of these problems and then just recently traded up to a 1987 Deere 8820," reports K.M. Wise, Rockyford, Alberta.

Lawrence Ring, Norris, S. Dak., likes his 1984 Gleaner L-3. "It has lots of capacity

and has been relatively trouble-free. The company could do a better job of assembly, however, and the price of spare parts is getting outrageous."

"They should put a seat in it instead of a park bench and teach their dealers how to adjust it to work right," says W.H. Kimball, West Liberty, Ohio, about his Massey Ferguson 880. "It would be a good machine if they would just put some finishing touches on it and get someone to set it so it wouldn't run grain over the back. We have tried about everything but I guess not the right thing to correct the problem."

"We're happy with our 1977 White 8600 combine but they should make the rear axle wider so the rear wheels would track behind the front wheels. I widened the rear axle myself. I also put a larger engine in it and now have ample power. We're also not

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satisfied with the cornhead. The gathering chains do not extend far enough forward on the bottom end of the snapping rolls and do not run fast enough. The snapping rolls run too fast," says Weldon Martz, Wilton, Iowa.

John Phelan, Perry, Iowa likes his Massey Ferguson 850 combine. "I can't think of anything that really needs improving. We've had hardly any down time and get really great service from our dealer. We did install a Herschel Tiger Jaw cutterbar and also put poly pad skid plates from May Wes Manufacturing (Gibbon, Minn. 55335) under the cutterbar. We hardly ever have to stop in beans now, even in wet ground."

"The performance of our 1982 Gleaner F-2 is fairly good. I have had few breakdown problems. My main complaint with the combine is that the grain tank is too small. I have the factory-installed extensions on the tank plus 1 ft. more but it's still not enough room for four rows, 1/2 mile long. So I must split the field or take short ends off and back out to unload 5 to 20 bu. The cornhead is alright but the automatic header control on the grainhead could be better. It's tricky to adjust. Also, I put plastic covers on the skid plates but the left side still likes to dig in when the ground is wet," says Walter Wilkens, Albert City, Iowa.

"Our 1983 Massey Ferguson 850 does everything we ask but I don't like the double loading auger. It cracks too much grain. I also need more room in the cab and I don't like the digital readout. I like to look at the engine rpm's, ground speed and cylinder

speed all at the same time. The automatic header controls are a joke but I understand they've been improved on newer models," says William P. Nicholson, Jr., Cherry Valley, Ark.

Dale Lung, Lake Lenore, Sask. is pleased with his 1980 International 1482. "It's easy to set, easy to check and reliable. My suggestion would be to increase the capacity of the clean grain leg. We can't get the grain away fast enough so it plugs up. We put a smaller sprocket on the leg and sped it up. We have also found that truing the rotor helps in barley."

"We moved the steering motor to the outside of the cab to reduce the hydraulic noise. Otherwise we're generally satisfied with our 1979 Massey Ferguson 750. One improvement I'd like to see is to make it easier to switch from one crop to another," says Jacob Wiebe, Winkler, Manitoba.

Philip Kermes, Hayward, Minn., owns a 1979 Deere 7720. "It has good capacity, we get good, clean, undamaged grain and it has been almost trouble-free. The cornhead works especially well, even in down and tangled corn. We installed a Herschel Tiger Jaws sickle for soybeans. It works well. The combine could also use a longer cleaning area."

"We're generally satisfied with our 1980 White 8900 combine. It harvested about 1,200 acres per year and has served us well. We do get some grain loss over the straw walkers when we push hard. Improvements we would like to see would be a reverse fan on the radiator and a reverse on the feeder chain," says Bill Ambler, Mallaig, Alberta.

Richard Smith, Kitscoty, Alberta, is happy with his 1986 Claas 96 Dominator combine built in Germany. "It works great. One small problem is that because the combine is made in Europe, it's shipped to North America with no swath pickup installed. Unfortunately, North America manufacturers are hard-pressed to manufacture a pickup of the quality of the combine and to match its capacity."

"We're very satisfied with the overall performance of 1977 International 914 pull-type except for the feeder chain which, because of its length, does not have that great of a life span. The feeder chain housing could have had a divider to support the top of the feeder chain thus reducing the overall stress on the chain and drives," says Andy Skoropad, Chamberlain, Sask.

Edward J. Bowler, Palmer, Sask., owns a 1982 New Holland TR95. "It has good

capacity and works especially well in malting barley. I installed the new-style rotors last year. They increased the rotor capacity slightly and reduced rotor noise and vibration. When harvesting tough grain the combine tends to overload the return with grain, plugging it. I installed cover plates (supplied by New Holland) on the grate under the rear beater which partially corrected this problem. Perhaps New Holland could redesign the shoe to allow the grain to fall through the sieves faster and not end up in the return. The 30-ft. rigid header

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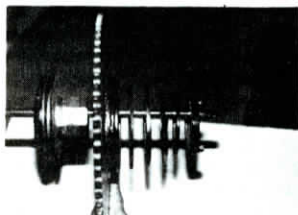
works satisfactorily in a normal crop but on very short, thin stubble crops, some of the heads tend to fall off the front of the sickle bar. I installed a Cray air reel (P.O. Box 1779, Fargo, N.Dak., 58107, ph 701 282-5520) which improved the performance on very short, thin crops. I also bolted 1 1/2-in. strips of belting on every second feeder slot to improve feeding of very short barley. Prior to that, on short barley crops, the straw would tend to pile up behind the table auger."

"We have been generally satisfied with our 1981 Gleaner N-6," says C. John Uphoff, Gridley, Ill. "We had some small problems which I think should have been spotted before mass production, but I guess that's why we have cutting torches and welders. A fan blade went to pieces and through the radiator. The company at first said they would pay but then changed their mind even though it was a defective blade. We paid. The company should redesign the inside of the rotor so it's got more aggressive bars. The change of angles on the flow-through design creates a "dead" spot that can cause an overload in green trash areas of soybeans. We put Deere corn and row heads on our Gleaner using Bish quick-tach header adaptors (Bish Manufacturing, Giltner, Neb. 68841). We've had no trouble with the 6-row cornhead and the row crop head is far superior to a conventional grain platform."

Combine Slip Clutch

It can cost as much as \$5,000 to repair the straw walkers and cranks on 914 and 915 IH combines if the warning horn fails to warn of a build-up on the walkers. When that happened to Erland Sten, Meadow Lake, Sask., he sat down and designed a slip clutch for the straw walker's direct drive.

The problem with the pull-type 914, and self-propelled 915, is that the walkers are direct-driven by chain off the beater shaft, unlike most modern combines which have a belt drive. If the walkers plug up, and the warning horn fails to sound, all five walkers and both cranks can be easily destroyed. Sten's fiber disk slip clutch installs with no modification. It can be adjusted to develop enough torque to run the walkers



but not enough to collapse them and twist the cranks.

Sten sells his add-on clutch kit for \$300 (Canadian).

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Erland Sten, Box 148, Meadow Lake, Sask. S0M 1V0 Canada (ph 306 236-5549).