

"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.

"My 1981 Deere 6620 is easy to set and the hydrostatic drive lets you combine at the optimum speed. It has greater capacity than I thought it would have and the reverser is worth the cost of the machine. I like the fact that they put the cab in the middle of their new machine. One modification we made was to install an Air Design cleaning fan speed adjuster (Air Design, Box 248, Scooby, Mont. 59263)," says Ross White, Thornhill, Manitoba.

Mike Cochran, Anadarko, Okla., owns a 1977 Gleaner L2. "It has plenty of power, the hydrostatic drive is very responsive and all controls are within easy reach. The hydraulics don't work well at low speeds, for example when attaching the header. I rebuilt the concave and cylinder bars (Montezuma Welding & Mfg., Montezuma, Kan.). The concave now has a tungsten clip on the wear surface, which almost eliminates wear, and the cylinder bars were also hard-surfaced with tungsten. I've been very happy with the results."

"We've been happy with MF combines for years and our 1987 Massey Ferguson 850 is another good one. We've had excellent service from our dealer. We're looking at Case/IH for our next machine even though we don't see many advantages in the machine. The problem is that it's going to be difficult to get repairs for Massey combines due to company problems," says Clarence Overstreet, Waveland, Ind.

Ken Salsman, Macon, Mo., bought a new Case/IH 1660 in 1988. "It has plenty of power and it's easy to set. The electric cylinder adjustment is handy as is the fan adjustment control. The cleaning capacity

capacity of a self-propelled 1480 and yet it leaves me with the use of the tractor the rest of the year."

"I completely rebuilt my Deere combine with the services of George Kuchar, of Kuchar Combine Performance (P.O. Box 595, Carlinville, Ill. 62626). He sells solid cylinders, a 15-bar precision concave, slow down sprockets, a straw walker kit, a concave adjuster, curved-edge flighting for the feeder auger, and many more add-ons that boost performance. It cost much less than buying a new machine," says James Erdman, Chenoa, Ill.

"My 1988 Deere 6620 Titan II has lots of capacity and outstanding performance. I particularly like the cylinder speed adjustment and grease banks," says Marlin Will, Altamont, Ill.

"We put a Gilcrest 4-WD "pusher" drive axle on our Massey Ferguson 750. It works great and will add years of life to my machine. Works as well as factory 4-WD at less cost," says Jeffrey Leonards, Crowley, La.

"We put a Vittitoe chaff spreader on our Case/IH 1460 combine in 1988 and it performed just as the company said it would. We've used it in wheat, soybeans and corn. Spreads residue evenly over the width of our 20-ft. grain platform so we can no-till crops the following spring with no problem," says Scott Skinner, Williamsport, Ohio.

Albert Richmeier, Morland, Kan., owns a Case/IH 1660. "It's got a nice cab, lots of capacity, an easy, quiet ride, is very simple to work on, and it harvests wheat clean. The only problem is that it's not too good in light wheat."

"Our 1981 Gleaner L-2 "corn plus" combine is a solid performer. I'd buy a new rotary except that the nearest service and dealership is 60 miles away. If there were a dealer near me and the price were competitive, I'd consider one. We have people nearby who'd like to run a dealership if it were available," says Danny Peterson, Hitchcock, S. Dak.

Steve Staats, Kewaunee, Wis., says his 1978 New Holland TR70 is a "best buy". "Performs great and doesn't crack corn kernels like other machines. The only change we made was to fit it with a Mud Hog add-on 4-WD axle for muddy, tough fields."

"I don't own a combine at this time but I hire a custom operator who runs a Deere 8820 to harvest 1,000 acres of grain each year. I've been very satisfied over the years with the 6620, 7720 and 8820's and prefer the green line when hiring work done over any other machine. One modification that's worked well to stop head loss in milo is an expanded rail about 1 ft. high across the top of the grain head, made out of light expanded steel screen so it doesn't obstruct your view of the cutterbar," says Donald L. Teel, Maywood, Neb.

"I'm happy with my 1988 Deere 7720 but I wish the company would have a seminar every year on combine operation and



Grain-Saving Cornhead Picks Up Downed Stalks

Earl Moore, Rush Center, Kan., made his own grain-saving cornhead by mounting a spinning auger cone on one end of the machine and rigging up a long-fingered "spider" wheel above the snouts to rake stalks into the machine.

"We've had a lot of down stalks due to corn borers. These attachments keep them from getting hung up. I hardly ever have to get off the machine anymore and we get all the corn into the combine," says Moore.

To make the cone auger that mounts on one end of his Allis Chalmers 4-row head, Moore used a 4-ft. long stainless steel exhaust stack off a semi truck. He welded a 1/2 by 1/8-in. strip of soft iron in a spiral along the length of the stack as

"flighting" and used a 1-in. dia. bar for the center shaft using self-aligning bearings. It drives off the end of the feeder auger.

To make the spider wheel, Moore ran two lengths of angle iron out over the snouts and fitted them with bearings. The center shaft is a 3/4-in. pipe running inside lengths of 1 1/2 in. pipe. Each of the 4 sets of "fingers" (1-in. dia. pipe) are positioned over the top of each snout, and are belt driven by a pulley that's chain-driven off the main gearbox. The end of each finger is bent toward the front of the combine so stalks won't hang up on them.

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adjustment and how to spot problems. When you spend this much on a complicated piece of equipment there should be good training available," says Herald M. Barton, Silver Lake, Minn.

"I'm happy with the performance of my 1975 Deere 7700 diesel, in part because I have a terrific dealer with a great service department. The combine has done a lot of work for me with not much down time. Any limitations of this combine have been fixed in the new Maximizer series machine, which I feel will lead the combine industry into the future. I have not modified my 7700 but I'm planning to install a rigid air foil chaffer from Harvest Systems, Inc. (Craik, Sask., Canada). I think the rigid design will provide a longer working life than the adjustable air foil chaffer," says Samuel Grandstrand, Karlstad, Minn.

"They should put a hydraulic ram on the tongue for transport. Otherwise I'm satisfied with our 1984 International 1482 pull-type. It's simple and reliable yet has plenty of capacity. Ours is a 'windrow special' which has a 12-ft. wide pickup that works very well. The only modification we've made is to install a Straw Storm attachment which chops and spreads straw over 40 to 50 ft., and spreads chaff," says Larry Husted, Stavelly, Alberta.

Tim Small, Fergus, Ontario, is happy with his 1985 Claas 96 combine but has a suggestion for improvement on the automatic header height control. "The control is difficult to adjust to different heights on our direct-cut grain head. We find the ground

sensors and their positioning to be poor. As for our pickup head, we were forced to adapt a White pickup to our combine because a Claas was not available. We've had quite a few problems with pickup belts and other breakdown problems. I would like to be able to buy a pickup made by Claas. The rest of the combine has many outstanding features such as a covered grain tank, centered cab, and large straw walker and sieve areas for harvesting high-yielding crops."

"I'm not happy with the grain head on my 1983 Massey Ferguson 860 in short crops because of too much head loss on the sickle bar. I've also had trouble with shearing of the hex key on the vertical unloading auger, and they should increase the capacity of the return grain system. I'd like to install a feederhouse reverser to take care of plug-ups," says John Androkovich, Lethbridge, Alberta, who's otherwise satisfied with his MF combine.

"I like our Case/IH 1460. It does a good job. One suggestion for improvement would be to get away from electric-over-hydraulic controls. We have had a lot of electrical problems," says Wayne Baronet, Crowley, La.

Russ Lashbrook, Lapeer, Mich., likes his 1984 Deere 6620 turbo Titan II. "I farm 1,800 acres and for the last 10 years have had all custom harvest work done by all kinds of combines and operators. The Deere combines always did the cleanest job so we purchased our 6620 used this year. So far it has performed perfectly. The only modification we've made is that we took the filler

"When they get something that works, why don't they just leave it alone?"

could be improved, however, because the rotor will take grain faster than the machine can clean it. I'm satisfied with the Case/IH cornhead, but not with the 1020 grain head. It doesn't float as well as the old 820 head. When they get something that works, why don't they just leave it alone?"

"We've been extremely well-satisfied over the years with our 1970 New Holland 975 combine. I bought it new and didn't even replace a bearing in the first 7 years I had it. It has been absolutely excellent," says Martin F. Anderson, Verndale, Minn.

"One of our best buys ever is our 1980 N-5 Gleaner with an 8-row cornhead. The combine has done nearly 10,000 acres with very little upkeep. It has tremendous capacity and still runs and looks like new," says Orlo Toquam, Blooming Prairie, Minn.

Randy Hoverson, Hannaford, N.D., owns a 1985 International 1482 rotary. "I like owning this pull-type combine. It has the