

ASK THE FARMER WHO OWNS ONE

"Owner's Report" On Belarus Tractors

More and more farmers have been asking questions about Russian-made Belarus tractors. With prices that run only a half to a third that of domestic-built machines, farmers who've never considered buying a foreign-built machine are now taking a second look.

We asked owners of Belarus tractors to "tell it like it is" about their machines. Names of Belarus owners were supplied to us "no strings attached" by Belarus dealers.

Here's how our survey turned out:

"It took me three months to decide about buying a foreign tractor but I'm glad I did," says Raymond Schmidt, Tioga, N. Dak., owner of a 1993 825 Belarus with front wheel assist. "It performs better than I expected. No problems. It's equipped with a Koyker loader and grapple fork. We had a lot of snow last winter, but were able to push right through 6-ft. high snowdrifts. I never got stuck once. It always starts even in temperatures down to 35 degrees below zero. In cold weather a handle in the cab rolls down a metal curtain in front of the radiator to help the engine run warmer. I use the loader 2 to 3 hours every day to feed round bales. It has a good hydraulic pump - I can pick up two 1,200 to 1,300-lb. bales and haul them a mile away with no problem. Road gear runs at about 28 mph.

"I paid \$24,000 for the tractor and loader. The tractor alone sells for about \$16,000 equipped with air conditioning, heater, radio, tape deck, and a cab with doors on both sides. The tractor looks kind of crude, but I'm willing to give up fancy styling in order to save money. I could almost have bought three Belarus 825's for the price of one comparable horsepower Deere."

"It has a lot of power for the price," says Barney Seaton, Williston, N. Dak., who, along with son Gene, owns a pair of Belarus 7100 300 hp 4-WD articulated tractors. "I bought the first one 1 1/2 years ago and was so satisfied that I bought another one six months later. They sell for less than half as much as other comparable horsepower 4-

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WD tractors and have a fabulous warranty. We use them 24 hours a day to pull a 60-ft. field cultivator and 60-ft. chisel plow. We also use them to pull a 40-ft. grain drill with a field cultivator in front. Neither tractor has ever been in the shop. They're easy to handle, fuel efficient and work as well as a Versatile or Steiger for a lot less cost. The engine is easy to service.

"They're equipped with air conditioning, stereo/radio, 3-pt. hitch, pto, two seats, and halogen lights. Dealer service has been excellent, with parts guaranteed for 24 hour delivery. If parts don't arrive in time, we get reimbursed or get a replacement tractor.

"We leased a Belarus Big Don 1500 self-propelled combine last year for \$65 per hour and really like it. It came with a 24-ft. header. For power and quality it puts Deere combines to shame. We used it to harvest wheat and barley and put almost 400 hours

on it. A Case-IH combine leases for about \$85 to \$90 per hour. We plan to buy another Belarus tractor and a combine."

"Our 81-hp, 1993 825 is a great chore tractor. We'd recommend it to anyone," says Lori Krause, Jackson, Neb. "We use it to grind feed for hogs. It's equipped with front wheel assist, which really comes in handy in winter on our sloping outdoor hog lot. We can unload feed without using chains no matter how muddy it gets. It has plenty of power and is equipped with a Koyker loader which I also like. We've used the loader to pull portable hog sheds through snow and to pull out tree stumps.

"One problem is that the lights are mounted in such a way that the loader blocks them, making it hard to see at night. We solved the problem by mounting two halogen lights on top of the cab. Fuel efficiency is great. We had a problem with hydraulic oil leaking around seals, but the dealer promptly took care of it. The operator's manual could provide more detail for some things. We paid only \$16,000 for the tractor."

"Ratiegh Bolli, Burwell, Neb., bought a 925 100 hp model last year but recently traded it in for a 1994 model with bigger tires and better hydraulics. "The first tractor I bought was equipped with 15.5 by 38 rear tires, which didn't have enough traction on rough ground. The new tractor has 16.9 by 38 tires, which make a world of difference, but it still rides rough because the wheelbase is 4 ft. shorter than other similar sized tractors. The 1993 model was 30 years behind on hydraulics and had a small pump with only two remote outlets. The new model has an American-made hydraulic system with a bigger hydraulic pump and three remote outlets.

"I use it to pull a 15-ft. sod disk 10 in. deep. It's equipped with front wheel assist so it really pulls. I've seen a 150 hp 2-WD tractor get stuck while pulling the same disk. The Belarus uses only 2 1/2 gal. of fuel per hour which is only about one third as much fuel as other comparable size tractors. I think competition from Belarus will force American companies to make more fuel efficient tractors. It sells for only about a third as much as a new Deere or Case-IH."

"I bought my 1993 505 65-hp model for only \$11,000. I love it," says Larry Newton, Goodman, Mo. "I use it to handle round bales, mow, rake, and bale hay. It has plenty of power and doesn't use any oil. I bought it equipped with a Memo high-lift heavy-duty loader that I really like. It bolts to the rear axle and will pick up 3,000 to 4,000 lbs. with no problems. I've seen other tractors break in half because the loader didn't attach to the rear axle. One time I even used the loader to pick up a 4,500-lb. tractor that was hung up on a tree stump.

"After we bought it we discovered that the hydraulic pump needed new rings. The



Belarus sells more tractors than any other tractor manufacturer in the world but the company has never done much business in North America. That's starting to change. One factor is low prices. Another is increasing quality. For instance, Belarus recently updated hydraulics on certain models to the same components used on Deere, Case-IH, and Ford New Holland tractors.

For more information on Belarus products, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Belarus Machinery, Inc., P.O. Box 23608, Milwaukee, Wis. 53223 (ph 414 355-2000).

dealer installed them under warranty. Another problem was that the drawbar was only about 10 in. off the ground and tended to drag hay whenever I straddled the windrow while baling. The dealer solved the problem by flipping it over to raise it 4 in. I understand they've raised the drawbars on new models. Another problem is that the 3-pt. hitch gradually drifts down while I'm

"The 3-pt. hitch gradually drifts down while I'm mowing hay."

mowing hay. I have to raise it every time I make a round to keep it from dragging loose hay. The dealer says the 3-pt. normally can be expected to drop 2 in. over a 5-min. period, but I don't think I should have to put up with that. I've heard that some other farmers in our area have had problems with their Belarus tractors. One had to rebuild the engine and others have had trouble with the hydraulics. The tractor has steel hydraulic lines with 90 degree bends which have caused oil leaks. In some cases the tractor has to be disassembled to get at the leak.

"It's easy on fuel, though. No matter how hard I use the tractor I can't burn more than 1 gal. of fuel per hour."

"James Hvinden, Maddock, N. Dak., owns a 1993 825 with a Koyker loader. "So far I like it very much and haven't had any problems. I use it for livestock chores and to load round bales. I plan to use it on my baler and rock picker. The engine could be better balanced to run smoother at lower rpm's. Fuel economy is okay. I paid \$24,500 for it equipped with the loader."

"Aldon Joyes, Westby, Mont., likes his 1993 925. "It has 460 hours with no problems. I use it mostly to feed round bales to my cows and to do light field work, including picking rocks. It's fuel efficient. One day I loaded two 14-ft. grain drills onto a transport and drove 6 miles to a field where I seeded 96 acres of oats. When I got back home the 34-gal. fuel tank was still 1/4 full. I think it uses only about half as much fuel as the Deere 4430 I used before. I paid \$26,500 for the tractor with loader and air conditioning. The synchromesh transmission shifts like the transmission on an old Farmall H or M tractor."

"Ron Nelson and son Mike, of Laurel, Neb., own a 1992 562M 65 hp Belarus. "It's a great chore tractor. We use it to grind feed for hogs, haul manure, and push snow. It'll easily pull a 1,500 honey wagon. My only complaint is that the parking brake doesn't lock up tight enough. It works like the parking brake on an old Model T car, with a button on a lever that you pull back. One time the brake didn't hold and our honey wagon rolled down a hill into the lagoon. Luckily the tractor didn't go in. It rides rougher than a Deere due to the shorter wheelbase but we paid only \$11,500 for it - about one third the price of a comparable Deere. The front wheel assist is a real plus for loader work. We never have to use tire chains. It never uses more than 1 1/2 gal. of fuel per hour. We used the tractor for 18 hours to haul 110 loads of manure from our lagoon and burned only 24 gal. of fuel, going round trip 1/4 mile. The factory lights were blocked by the loader so we mounted extra lights on top of the cab."

"It looks crude and doesn't have a lot of extras compared to American-made tractors, but it does everything I ask it to do. I'm well satisfied," says Jerrold Burns, Cartwright, N. Dak., owner of a 1993 1770 170 hp articulated 4-WD Belarus. "It has 97 hrs. on it. I used it last year to pull a 20-ft. chisel plow and field cultivator. I also plan to use it to pull a pair of 14-ft. grain drills hooked together. It has plenty of power with coil springs on the front wheels so it rides good. The cab is fairly quiet, but that may be because the engine runs quiet. It's more fuel efficient than my 1974 IH 1066, a 120 hp tractor. It's built like American tractors were built 15 to 20 years ago. I don't need special wrenches or a computer to work on it. Dealer service has been excellent.

"I wanted to buy a Case-IH tractor but don't have enough acres to justify the expense so I went with Belarus. I paid \$36,700 for it last July. A 150 hp front wheel assist Magnum sells for \$93,000. My dealer says he has trouble keeping up with demand for the 1770 model. Belarus rates it at 185 hp, but independent tests rate it at 170 horsepower."

"Kenneth Vatne, Wildrose, N. Dak., bought an 825 Belarus last winter. "I moved a lot of snow with it and plan to use it this summer to pull a 14-ft. hay conditioner. It's built simple, is easy to work on, and fuel efficient. The tractor's original hydraulic loader control levers were hard to reach so the dealer replaced them with a pair of