

"Owner's Report" On Best, Worst Farm Tractors

Are you satisfied with your tractor? How could it be improved? Have you modified your tractor in any way? What accessories have you bought for it?

These are some of the questions we asked randomly selected tractor owners in an effort to highlight those tractors 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:

"Our worst buy tractor is a Russian-made Belarus 800," says Jack Elliot, Dundark, Ont. "It's always got an oil leak and something to fix. After the dealer we bought from went out of business it took 2 years to get a heater from the company. We had trouble with valves breaking and pistons cracking from day one. It has good power and fuel economy but poor workmanship and handling. Next time I'll buy Deere or Ford because of better dealer service."

Mark Anderson, Wilton, N. Dak., likes his 1979 Deere 4640 but he has suggestions for improvement. "I'd like to see a more accessible engine compartment with an easy opening hood and it should be fitted with a swivel seat. It could also use shades or tinted glass to protect the operator from the sun."

"This 1980 IH 5088 with front-wheel assist has worked exceptionally well for us. We really like the way the transmission shifts and the FWA has been a real lifesaver during the last three wet years. We made new hydraulic arms for under the cab of the tractor. The factory ones were made on the light side," says Jon Maus, Albany, Minn.

Gary Navrkal, Bellwood, Neb., has had both good and bad luck with his 1975 White 105 diesel. "I liked the low initial purchase price. It has plenty of power and is handy. However, it uses far too much fuel and breaks down too often. The clutch is a weak link. The cab has good visibility but it is not nearly as dustproof as other models. Because of the solid frame construction you have to pull the motor to work on the clutch. The hydraulic pump is external and has too many leaks. We moved the air conditioner condensers from behind the cab to in front of the radiator, and replaced the muffler with straight pipe. Both modifications really helped."

"We're generally satisfied with our 1978 Deere 4440 at 2,400 hrs. except that, like most Deere tractors, it's got a weak air conditioning pump. We replaced the pump on this tractor and have had to replace the clutch on the pump, too. We had the same problem with our Deere 4430," says Blaine Leippi, Odessa, Sask., who's thinking of installing a swivel seat from Apollo Dist. Corp. (Box 725, Bismark, N. Dak. 58502 ph 701 255-4700).

Ronald Wall, Bradford, Ill., is pleased with his 1985 Deere 4450. "It's comfortable and easy to drive. Has given us no problems except that it could use a larger rear view mirror to see around big wagons."

"I'm very satisfied with our 1979 International 3588 2+2. Has good

traction and has required few repairs. We're running it at 1900 hp. and it seems very economical at this range. It could use a little better seat and they could also shorten the front end. We had problems with the air conditioner for awhile," says Arlynn Schug, Ida Grove, Iowa.

"It needed a heavier clutch so we installed a 12-pad tractor-puller clutch from Hi-Capacity Inc., in Humbolt, Iowa. Works great," says Harley Hassebroek, Buffalo Center, Iowa, about his 1971 Deere 4320.

"We've been pleased with our 1972 IH 1066 equipped with a turbo diesel. We've operated it 3,750 hrs. and had no trouble with the engine or power train. But we've got several complaints that have developed over our years of use. The front-end steering linkage develops play and wears out too fast. The manual should tell owners to routinely watch the big nuts on top of steering knuckle posts and keep them real tight. Another complaint is the positioning of the transmission filter. Oil runs out when you change filters. A third problem is that the throttle linkage gets dry under the hood and is hard to get at even with a can of spray lube. As for modifications, I lengthened the throttle engine speed lever for more precise control of engine speed and mounted a guard over the starter fluid solenoid button so you don't bump it with your knee accidentally," says Duane Rudd, McVine, N. Dak.

"Our 1983 Versatile 875 has 3,000 hrs. with no problems at all. I also have a 1979 Versatile 875 with 4,500 hrs. We put a clutch in it this summer and it only took 3½ hrs. That's all the trouble we've had. I'm completely satisfied," says Leo Hogetvedt, Ulen, Minn.

"The front-wheel assist is a great boost in tough spots."

"The front-wheel assist is a great boost in tough spots. Good power and very smooth riding. Power steering could be a little faster and fuel economy could be improved, but overall construction of the tractor seems to be good. Easy to service," says George Sears, Atkinson, Ill., pleased with his 2294 Case-International.

"I'm satisfied with our 1982 Allis-Chalmers 8050 MFWD but it's had some problems. The pto clutch isn't

heavy enough, the front axle tread width is not easily changed so some widths are impossible to obtain, and it needs a ground-speed indicator. They should improve the backrest of seat, change the seat so you can turn to the right, and improve the fuel economy which is good at 75% of power but poor at 100% of power," says Leslie Felsch, Ridgeville, Manitoba.

Yvon Tasse, St. Paschal, Ont., likes his 1983 Kubota 8200 tractor. "A solid machine that does what's promised. No problems yet. We'd buy another one."

Elwood Coons, Winchester, Ont., names his 1986 Case-IH 1584 as "best buy" tractor. "Has a good cab and good maneuverability for a 4-WD. Can't think of an improvement we'd make but we haven't had it long."

James Greer, Gorrie, Ont., says he's well-satisfied with his 1984 International 5088. "It's a nice tractor to drive with good fuel economy. Like the large fuel tank. Wish they would put steel guard frames around the side windows so they won't break when working alongside brush with the windows open."

"Our Deere 4040 is a good tractor but they could improve fuel economy and make it possible to see the rear wheels when working in the field since I can't tell when they're slipping till I'm stuck," says Woodrow W. Boulware, Auxvasse, Mo.

"The steering and front-end of this tractor should be improved. It was built much too weak and the brakes are too light for a tractor this size. It's hard to service and hard to get parts when needed. Poor engineering all around. It was made by Fiat in Italy," says Mark Mensing, Blue Earth, Minn., about his 1980 Allis Chalmers 5050 MFWD. "We beefed up the front steering housing where the steering cylinder attaches by adding more support. We also installed a complete main frame from the front of the tractor to the rear axle on which to mount the loader."

"It's the most comfortable, best handling tractor I've ever driven and I've driven most all makes. Dollar for horsepower, you can't beat it," reports Mark Francois, Dundee, Iowa, about his 1981 International 1086.

"We're very pleased with the 15-speed transmission. Plenty of power for any job. Nice, comfortable cab," says Duane L. Rodine, Polk, Neb., happy with his 1984 Deere 4450. "We added an Agri-Tech acre counter that works well (manufactured by Agri-Tech, 14897 Foxhill Ave. Hugo, Minn. 55038 ph 612 426-3902)."

Steve Trost, Red Bud, Ill., owns a 1980 Versatile 935. "It's the easiest-to-service tractor I've ever seen. The engine has the torque and operating range that'll let you run at various engine speeds, eliminating the need for shift on the go. One problem is that it's difficult to steer. Factory

should offer kit to convert older tractors (Series I, II and III) to new (Designation 6) style steering. One big advantage of the tractor is that it's equipped with a Cummins engine, Eaton drive train components, and Gresen hydraulics and parts can therefore be found almost anywhere. The simplicity of these tractors enables the farmer to do most all repair work on his own with less downtime. One improvement I made was to install a Deere seat. It's more comfortable and helps the operator stay put in rough conditions."

"We're well-satisfied with our 1979 IH 1586. It has good power and is quiet and fuel efficient," says Robert Strommen, New England, N. Dak. "I wish the doors on the cab opened the other way. When facing the wind it's hard to get out as the wind pushes the door against me and into the rear tires. Would be easy to trip and fall to the ground."

"I bought this Versatile 835 new in 1985. Lots of power, lugging ability and good fuel economy, considering the work its 855 Cummins has to do. I wouldn't change much on this machine. I'm happy to see such a high-quality machine come out of Canada," says Paul Frayne, Goderich, Ont.

D.O. Knoll, Almyra, Ark., owns a 1984 Deere 4450. "It's powerful and comfortable. The 15-gear transmission is great under load. I wish,

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"I'd buy another White," says Gordon E. Hennen, Farmington, Minn., who owns a 1979 White 285. "We've had no major problems with this model but the engine should be fitted with a turbo charger. It's a little hard on fuel. I added lights, a bigger toolbox and a larger step to get on and off tractor."

David J. Hanson, Russell, Ontario, says his 1952 Deere model 60 tractor is his "best buy" ever. "It may not have the power, comfort or fuel economy of today's tractors, but it was miles ahead of its competition in 1952. It had power steering, for example, and an excellent deck with full padded seat at a time when everyone else was still using steel seats. All parts for this 34-year-old tractor are still available through the dealer, even including sheet metal. Some manufacturers can't supply parts for tractors of much more recent vintage. It was modified with an add-on 3-pt. hitch."

"It's easy on fuel, well-made and the cab is quiet," says Vern Nelson,