

"Owners Report" On Best, Worst Combines

Are you satisfied with the performance of your combine? How could it be made better? Are you satisfied with the corn and grain heads available for your combine? 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 can't depend on it at all. There's always something going wrong. In 1,800 hrs., I've spent over \$10,000 on parts and labor. When it's running, it does a good job under most conditions," says Dave Jones, Butler, Ill., about his 1979 **International** 1460 rotary.

"We mounted a Hurricane chaff spreader, developed by Clarke Industries, Rosetown, Sask., Canada, on our 1982 **Allis Chalmers** Gleaner N-6 combine. We also installed a grain return system made by Allis Chalmers that returns grain back to the rotor instead of the accelerator rolls. Without this modification a Gleaner N-series combine doesn't thresh very well in our part of the country. The cab control for the cleaning fan should be totally redesigned," says Jerry Eliason, Outlook, Sask. Canada.

"It's got the best design in the combine business," says Lin H. Johnson, Idaho Falls, Idaho, about his **Allis Chalmers** N-6 Gleaner. "The galvanized maintenance-free body is a big plus but the portions of the body not galvanized could benefit from a better paint job. We added flasher and turn lights to the outer ends of our 20-ft. header because we have to drive on roads with heavy traffic. They're wired to function with those on the combine and are visible from front and rear."

Steve Heater, Urbana, Ill., has had trouble with his 1972 **Deere** 6600. "The 329 cu. in. engine is undersized for handling six rows of corn. After about 1,000 hrs., just about every bearing went out, resulting in tremendous amount of downtime. Deere changed the length of the cleaning fan belts so grain cleaning is now very good. Also, the straw chopper failed. Numerous dealers said it was irreparable but, after some machine shop work, we fixed it. Repairs on this machine are extremely difficult and time-consuming."

"I'm generally satisfied with our 1981 **Allis Chalmers** F2 Gleaner. Does a clean, efficient job. Although ground speed in corn is slow it does pick up down corn well. I cut back stripper plates on the corn head to allow stalks to enter easier. I also added fluid to the steering wheels for ballast," says Brymer Humphreys, New Hartford, N.Y.

"In our hillside farming operation we need a combine that'll work on up to 50% slopes. We need this combine's 2-way leveling device, large

traction tires, beefed-up frame, strong drive train and hydraulic system. In addition to its simple design, it's easy to work on and has good power," says Cecil Martin, Culdesac, Idaho, about his 1980 **Allis Chalmers** Gleaner MH-2.

"It has a grain loss problem. They should increase the cleaning area by half and reverse the outside straw walker augers. Needs more sieve space for rolling ground," says Alan Talmage, LaGrange, Ind., about his 1982 **Deere** 6620.

Brady Wheatley, Rich Hill, Mo., is pleased with his 1983 **Deere** 7720 with 4-WD. "We're satisfied but our older, lighter Deere 55 and 45 performed just as well or better in muddy fields. The 7720 is heavy and hard to maneuver even though it's equipped with 30.5 by 32 rice tires in front and 16.9 by 26 rice tires on the rear. It has plenty of power, good capacity and we like the fast unloading. Both the corn head and flex head are fine."

"It needs a better hydraulic system. I can't raise the platform or swing the auger out when turning and it doesn't steer easily enough. It needs a bigger clean grain elevator because its threshing capacity is bigger than the elevator. The straw chopper should be mounted at the very rear to eliminate spreaders because they throw cobs and heads onto belts and knock them off, resulting in bad plug-ups or broken parts. The 820 flex head needs better craftsmanship at the ends where tin moves up and down as the head flexes. We modified our rotor by putting spirals on the back half of it to move straw or cobs through with less horsepower. The modification was developed by a farmer in Michigan but was done for us by our IH dealer," says Gary Becker, Crystal, N. Dak., otherwise pleased with his 1979 **International** 1460.

Richard L. Steiner, Tremont, Ill., owns a 1981 **Deere** 6620. "We've got about 1,000 hrs. on it with no major problems. It threw several straw chopper hammers off before we finally re-welded every hammer. No bearings, belts or chains, and the engine doesn't use oil. All you have to do is drive it! We'd like the company to go back to the corn screen used in the old Deere 55 combines. I'd rather use a screen in the separator than adjustable sieves." Our only modification was to add a Rota-Shoe to the bean head. A great improvement in sticky bean fields."

"Structural members are much heavier than most competitive makes and models. Threshing capacity is adequate, most adjustments are easy to make, and controls are conveniently located. It could use a remotely variable belt-drive cylinder because changing it manually takes a lot of time. A remotely variable pickup drive would also be a welcome improvement. The pickup head we use works well although the elevator housing protrudes into the table about 8 in. and causes a large amount of shattering as the swath is pulled past it. I installed a fairing there to solve the problem. I also made a closeable drain hole in the left side of the clean grain cross auger housing to stop water build-up and prevent rust," says Merlin Toth, Saltcoats, Sask., owner of a 1981 **White** 8650.

"Our 1982 **Massey Ferguson** 850 does a good job and has good capacity but has had some problem with grain going over the front of the screen when traveling downhill. I put a piece of metal on the front side of the screen to keep grain from going over and took out a pan that ran the grain back about one-third of the way on the screen. It was preventing full use of the sieves," says LeRoy Wikert, Emmetsburg, Iowa.

"There are other combines that do as good a job but there's none that do any better," says Mathew Aerts, Denfield, Ont., about his 1982 **Deere** 6620. "The only fault this combine has is that it's no good in mud. In wet conditions you just cannot steer. The rear end tends to slide, causing the combine to go sideways, and it's impossible to keep on the row. One improvement I've made was to remove the corn savers, which enables us to pick up down corn better."

"It needs more grease fittings, because sealed bearings don't seem to last, and it should be equipped with a door in the grain tank to get at the

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back side of the engine. Also, this combine can't handle heavy amounts of straw in wheat or barley unless you slow down," says Bob Yule, Monkton, Ont., otherwise pleased with the performance of his 1983 **Deere** 7730 4-WD. He added grain tank warning lights — one in the cab and one on the tank — that show when the tank is full.

W. Grayston, Shellbrook, Sask., has modified his 1975 **Deere** 6601 pulley-type. "I put a large window in the hopper to show the grain level and I extended the top return auger shaft so I could see when it's working. I made a weather-proof cap for the hopper and installed an auger un-plugger. Finally, I put extra lights on it."

J. Douglas Robinson, Shelby, Iowa, owns a 1981 **International** 1460. "It'll do twice the acres in one day that my old 760 Massey would do. Has far more capacity and is quiet and easy to

run. There is, however, a grain loss problem when the machine leans to the right. Also the corn head has a problem with gear boxes. The first one went out at 250 hrs. IH is standing behind the product, however, and plans to completely re-do the head."

"My main objection is difficulty of maintenance. To gain access to some belts and shafts, it's necessary to dismantle a significant part of the machine. It also needs an oil cooler for the hydraulic and hydrostatic oil. On hot days, warning lights and buzzers often come on even when oil levels aren't low," says Wilbur F. Kelly, The Dalles, Oreg., about his 1980 **Deere** 6622.

"Performance of our 1980 **New Holland** TR75 in corn and beans has been satisfactory but maintenance is complicated and time-consuming. Design and workmanship is poor in some areas. After only 1,000 acres, the clean grain elevator buckets began to crack and fall off. Keys fell out of the pins on the attaching links on the feederhouse chain. The bean head has no row dividers and the corn head threw off ears until we installed a slowdown sprocket that helped prevent ear loss. The company came out with new corn and bean heads the year after we bought ours and some of the other problems may also have been solved," says Kenneth Dyson, Carson, Iowa.

"We're well-satisfied now that the dealer has put in eight different conversion kits!" says Jerry F. Mondrik, Louise, Tex., about his 1980 **White** 9700 rotary. "I wish the fingers on the 18-in. dia. platform auger were bigger in diameter. The header floor should be more steeply angled behind the sickle to permit gravity to pull grain down to the feeder auger. As it is, too much milo ends up out on the ground. I bought an International 24-ft. header and made it fit. I use it for milo and use White's head for soybeans. I've had to replace the quick-cut sickle on a White standard sickle because wet dirt from fire ant hills would jam the sickle so tight my pickup truck would spin its wheels pulling the sickle out of the header. Standard type sickles have room on the bottom for dirt to fall out. I also special ordered a White soybean screen and welded angle irons under the sieve on the sides to hold the screen. Our elevator manager said my beans are the cleanest he's ever seen. I also made round holes, one on each side of the combine, to pull corn stalks out without having to pull out the sieves."

Warren Tommasch, Gladstone, N. Dak., is happy with his 1977 **Massey Ferguson** 750. "We pick up double swaths with little trouble. The combine can handle a lot of grain in a day. The original hydrostatic lever and cable controls were very hard to move and, at times, we weren't able to back up. We removed the cable control system and replaced it with a remote hydraulic ram to move the hydrostatic control valve so it's similar to the variable speed control on other Massey combines."

"I put white plastic 'shoes' under my bean head to help it slide over wet ground. They're made by May-Wes