

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

think it's the most economical tractor in its class, and it also has the highest torque diesel engine in its class. It has no trouble handling my 6-ft. rotary mower or my 5 1/2-ft. snowblower. I use it a lot to do custom snowblowing on 16 driveways and three church parking lots. It always starts right up without using glow plugs, even at temperatures down to 10 degrees below zero.

"I modified an old **Cozy Cab** to fit the tractor. The windows were broken so I installed new ones off a Massey Harris tractor cab. I modified just about every part of the Cozy



Cab except the doors and window frames so it would fit the tractor. I paid \$100 for the cab and \$200 for the windows. The cab was originally built in one piece and was too heavy for one person to remove, so I rebuilt it to come off in pieces. The roof bolts onto the tractor's roll cage. The front and back sides go on separately."

Ken Kohlhof, Katonah, N.Y.: "My female **Border Collie** is my best buy. She is more intelligent than most of the hired hands around here, is dedicated to whatever task she is assigned, and is a most loyal companion who follows me everywhere. She's a real treasure."

Dennis D. Hartman, Williamsburg, Mich.: "I like the hydraulic products and adhesives, including no. 880 C&C cartridge grease for grease guns, sold by **Texas Refining Corp.** of Fort Worth, Texas. In the past I've used more expensive greases in my 1958 David Bradley tractor and 3-blade, 42-in. mower deck, but this grease is far superior. It doesn't drip out of the gun in hot weather and stays nice and soft even during the coldest weather."

Bill Reeks, Cromwell, Ky.: "My 2001 **Sears Craftsman** garden tractor equipped with a 17 1/2 hp engine and a 42-in. mower



Broken Axle

deck has performed well, except for problems with the front axle and the spindle on the left front wheel. The axle literally broke in half due to metal that was too thin, and the left front spindle housing split due to poor factory welds. The spindle had worn 1/8 in. at the bottom. I was told the company's replacement axles were built heavier so I ordered a complete new axle. To my dismay, I discovered that it was an identical replacement and didn't use it. Instead, I rebuilt the broken axle by clamping it back together and welding it properly. At the same time, I welded two 3/8-in. lengths of rebar onto the bottom side of the axle to make it stronger than new.

"The tractor's front wheels have what are called friction bearings, although I don't consider them bearings because even with regular greasing, the left front spindle wore ex-

cessively on the lower side. I welded and built up the worn area, then machined it so the wheel would fit on properly. After six months of use I'm now satisfied with this machine. The front axle and spindle were the only problems I've experienced with it. I told Sears I now know why they call their machines 'Craftsman'. It's because the customer has to be a craftsman just to keep them going.

"Would I buy another Sears Craftsman garden tractor? Since I know how to repair their weak points, I probably would, if I could buy the machine at a discount. We have a 1996 Sears Craftsman garden tractor equipped with a 13 hp Briggs & Stratton engine and a 42-in. deck that has been trouble-free. It has a better built front axle, but that axle won't fit the 2001 model."

Paul Wadeson, Hancock, N.Y.: "My 2002 **Chevrolet** Silverado crew cab pickup is a worst buy. At 70,000 miles the fuel injectors had to be rebuilt. Luckily they were under warranty. Then the transmission quit working while I was driving down the highway. I had to pay for that. Now I have to watch white smoke puffing out of the tail pipe every once in awhile for no rhyme or reason. Of course, it never does it at the dealer's."

Chris Kluga, Hollister, Calif.: "My 2000 **Kubota** 3010 tractor equipped with a hydrostatic transmission is my best buy. It's a real workhorse and is worth its weight in gold. I'd buy another one without question."

Art Bargabos, Lynchburg, Va.: "My 2002 **Caterpillar** skidsteer is a best buy. It's easy to operate and well built.

"My 2004 **Chevrolet** 3500 1-ton dually extended cab pickup equipped with a Duramax diesel engine and Allison automatic transmission is a best buy. It has plenty of torque for pulling heavy loads."

On the negative side, he lists his 1998 **ASV MD-70** posi-track skid loader. "I started to have problems at 300 hours with the tracks falling off on hillsides, hydraulic lines breaking, and track bearings wearing out prematurely. It seemed like I was always working on the machine. I about bankrupted me. I got no support from the dealer or manufacturer."

J.J. Morris, Black Mountain, N.C.: "It did everything I expected, and a lot more," says J.J. about his 1994 **Kubota** L2350 tractor. "It has plenty of power, is fuel efficient, and has required only routine maintenance. Two years ago I traded for an MX 5000 so I could pull a disc mower and round baler. The MX 5000 has lived up to all my expectations, although it does use a lot of fuel. But I miss the L2350 more than my ex-wife. Bigger is better, but the L2350 was a lot handier for everyday use. Its trade-in value was only \$2,300 less than what I paid for it."

Lawrence E. Smith, Sand Lake, Mich.: Lawrence nominates his 2000 **Kuhn** GA 4100 hay rake and 2001 **Kuhn** GF 5001 tedder as his "best buys". "Our dealer delivered the rake to our farm for trial use. But once we got it the rake never left our farm. It's built with quality and is easy to use and to adjust. Its only weak point is the tongue, which isn't built as heavy as the rest of the machine."

"Regarding the tedder, we love its hydraulic outer rotor lift for transport. It works much better than the manual swingback on the New Holland tedder. But this machine, too, has a weak tongue. The tongue could also be made about 18 in. longer, but in my opinion the tongues on all pull-type tedders are too short. I just wish Kuhn was made in the U.S."

Mark Coulston, Eau Claire, Mich.: "I bought a 1950's **International Harvester** 300 utility tractor nine years ago for just \$750. A friend converted the tractor to 12 volts and added a custom-built 3-point hitch. I've used

"Worst Buy" Camper Trailer

Mark Bruellman, Rolfe, Iowa, recently sent FARM SHOW photos of what was left of his Dutchman 31-ft. camper trailer.

"We bought the camper in 2002 and intended to use it as our 'home away from home' as we moved between job sites," says Bruellman, who operates a grain bin moving business. "The camper was six months old. Immediately after I got it home, I called the dealer and told him the hitch was spongy and that I wanted to beef it up. He said that if I did that, the warranty would be voided. Shortly afterward while I was driving down the highway, the trailer separated from the hitch and went rolling into a ditch. The company says the accident happened because the truck I used - a GM 33,000 GVW single axle truck - was too big. They also said we had overloaded the camper. But all we had in there were everyday belongings such as clothes and food, etc. We're still fighting them. They stall, stall, stall trying to wear us down. It was a tough loss because it was going to be our home for that summer."

Bruellman says the company also claims that because he used the trailer for business, the warranty was voided. "But what's their definition of business? We pulled the trailer between job sites, and our family also used it on vacations."

He paid \$23,000 for the trailer and says his insurance company paid him the depreciated value of \$16,000.



Mark Bruellman's 31-ft. camper trailer separated from its hitch and rolled over into a steep ditch.



Bruellman thinks the hitch was underbuilt. The company says he overloaded it.

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this tractor to chop brush, plow snow, disk, push dirt, haul logs, dig out ponds with a slip scoop, and even to pull stranded motorists out of mud and snow. It has done everything I've asked it to, and economically. It has some shortcomings, but the 1950's engineering makes it easy to work on and fairly inexpensive to maintain. Some day I'll want a newer tractor equipped with a front-end loader and power steering, but for now I'm satisfied with this one. It happens to be the same age as me."

Jim Bugg, Curran, Mich.: "My 2003 **Chevrolet** Trailblazer is my worst buy. The first thing to go was the windshield wiper motor, then the sway bar on the right side. After that the rear window defroster quit working and I had to replace the window. All these items were covered by warranty as they happened before the vehicle had 35,000 miles on it. Then at 40,000 miles a bearing on the air conditioner went out and the pump had to be replaced. At the same time, the alternator had to be replaced as well as the tie rod on the left side. These items were no longer covered by warranty and cost me \$1,300. You'd think that a new vehicle would work better."

Wayne Roberts, Jeffersonville, Vt.: "My 2000 **Zetor** 3340 is a pretty good tractor, but for what new tractors cost these days you'd

"You'd think a new vehicle would work better."

expect them to be trouble-free. This one isn't. It has an onboard compressor, but the fittings on it don't make it easy to fill a tire with air. This tractor has a lot of power, steers great, and is fuel efficient. However, the 4-WD engagement system is flimsy and gets balled up with mud. The rear work light didn't work from day one so I had to rig one up myself. Also, you'd think they could add a fiber glass roof over the open tractor at a fair price.

"I wish I would have bought the company's front-end loader when I bought the tractor,

but instead I bought a Hardy loader which was recommended to me by local farmers. It was a big mistake, because the bucket tilt cylinders don't have big enough rods on the pistons. They get bent. I called the company but they said they had never heard about this problem. I had to get bigger pistons which meant redesigning the loader. It was a lot of work. I'll never buy a Hardy loader again."

Larry E. Brown, Courtland, Kansas: "My **Sunflower** 30-ft., three-section, folding no-fill grain drill is my worst buy. When the drill is folded for transport it has a ground clearance of only 11 or 12 inches. As a result, the press wheels get bent sideways if they come in contact with the ground when traveling over uneven terrain. Then they don't track over the seed furrows, which results in uneven stands and poor emergence."

"The company says it will replace the press wheels during the first year following the purchase. However, after that it will be my problem. The cost to replace each press wheel is about \$75. We had as many as eight press wheels damaged at one time after we crossed a county road."

Wayne W. Harley, New Brighton, Penn.: "Our 1993 **Chevrolet** 1500 Silverado pickup is a worst buy. It had only 57,000 miles on it when we got rid of it at a salvage price. The frame that supports the front suspension rusted badly, causing it to break. The transmission had to be rebuilt twice in recent years, and we had to install a complete new exhaust system. GM refused to accept any responsibility for the rusted frame. So much for the company's slogan. 'We'll be there.'

"Our **Deere** Gator 6 x 4 had only 600 hours on it when we traded it off. Ever since it was new we had problems with the machine's Kawasaki engine. Gas would leak into the engine oil, and we constantly had fouled spark plugs. Our Deere dealers tried for years to solve the problem but couldn't, so we traded the Gator for a new **Cub Cadet** Country 6 x 4. It's a best buy and is superior to the Gator in every way. It has a perky Honda air-

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