

## Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

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cooled engine which propels the Cadet up hills with ease. We'll never go back to a Gator."

**Tim Yoder, Whiteville, Tenn.:** "We're disappointed in the four rodent repellent strobe lights we purchased from **B-Alert, Inc.** The mini strobe runs continuously for 8 to 12 hours on a single D-cell battery. The strobe flashes 60 to 70 times per minute. We bought the strobe lights after we started having trouble with deer in our strawberries. However, the first night the lights were on, deer ate plants within 40 ft. of one of the lights. The second night there was even more damage. After that we gave up on the lights and resorted to other measures. While these lights may work in some situations, they didn't work for us. They aren't even as bright as a camera flash.

"While I was disappointed that the lights didn't work, I was even more disappointed at the response I received when I called the company to discuss the problem. I was told their lights always work and that I was the first person to say they didn't work. They said I could return the lights but there would be a 25 percent 'restocking fee.' We lost 25 percent of what we had paid for the lights and also had to pay for shipping both ways. It seems strange that a company with a product that always works can't afford to have a 100 percent money back guarantee."

**Glenn Rooker, Tuttle, Okla.:** "Here's a photo of my best buy - my trusty old **Massey Harris 82** combine. I bought this machine



new in 1960 when the company was offering a special incentive program to sell its 1959 models. It's amazing how little money I've had to spend on maintenance and repairs over the past 43 years.

"The manager of our grain elevator once told me I brought the cleanest wheat to town and wanted to know what kind of machine I had."

**C.F. Marley, Nokomis, Ill.:** "Fiskars long handle shears is my best buy (Fiskars, 780 Carolina St., Sauk City, Wis. 53583 ph 800 500-4849). The cutting head rotates 360 degrees to work at any angle. It's ideal for reaching high-up branches, or it can be rotated 90 degrees and used to cut at ground level. The



secret is an adjustable hub that lets you lock the shears at any desired angle."

**Lloyd Hansen, Nipigon, Ontario:** "My 1997 **Cub Cadet 2160** garden tractor is equipped with a Warner electric clutch drive which failed after only 107 hours of use. This clutch drive has all sealed bearings and isn't serviceable. Upon contacting both Cub Cadet and Warner I was told this clutch drive is

a throw-away unit. The new clutch, plus tax and labor, cost me 10 percent of the price of a new tractor. How ironic that the service manual on one page tells of the importance of lubricating all moving parts, while the next page says the clutch requires no maintenance. Buyer beware.

"MTD garden tractors continue to use the Warner clutch, so the problem may still be there. However, I notice the clutch on those tractors is spaced a little farther from the engine so the closest bearing to the engine maybe doesn't run so hot. The rest of the machine has been trouble-free."

**John F. Wohlwend, Foxboro, Wis.:** "I like my 2003 **Petrogen** gasoline cutting torch. It goes through steel like no other torch I've ever used, working much faster than any acetylene torch. The gas flame oxidizing process keeps the slag cool which reduces the possibility of fire."

**Steve Floyd, Eustace, Texas:** "My 1992 **Stihl 18-in.** chain saw is my best buy. It still runs as good as new and has required only two new spark plugs and a new bar and chain every few years.

"My 1998 and 2002 cargo trailers made by **WW Trailers** in Madill, Oklahoma, are both worst buys. Both trailers have leaked ever since they were new. Every time I stop a leak in one place another leak appears somewhere else. The company says its trailers are water-tested, but they don't guarantee them not to leak."

**Bill Takacs, Chagrin Falls, Ohio:** "My **New Holland TN75** tractor does everything I ask it to. It would be nice if the tractor was built a little heavier, and I wish the seat could be folded over to keep rain or snow off whenever you have to get off the tractor temporarily."

**Ron Cosby, Stantonville, Tenn.:** "My 1992 **Ford Ranger 4-WD** pickup is my best buy. It gets 22 mpg, and the 4-WD works great. This pickup drives and rides better than the 1992 Nissan pickup I previously owned.

"My **Belarus 240A** tractor is my worst buy. The power steering went bad and it shifted hard."

**Bill Knoff, Nashotah, Wis.:** "I'm a dealer for **Thomas** skid steer loaders, which are an excellent product. They're made in Canada by a great company with good distributor support. These loaders are equipped with a Kubota engine which can't be beat, and they're competitive in price. The open back door makes everything on them easy to service. Best of all, they come with a 5-year warranty. I liked mine so much I became a dealer two years ago (ph 262-646-8186 or www.bilbarfarms.com)."

**Steven Hawkins, Booneville, Ark.:** Steven nominates his 1997 **Deere 970 4-WD** tractor equipped with a 430 front-end loader as his "best buy." "After I bought this tractor I bought a 220-acre ranch. Now I use it to operate a 9-ft. Vicon cutter, New Holland 850 baler, and numerous other implements that are probably too big for it. I also use it to haul rocks, hay, wood, shavings, litter, etc. This tractor is rated at 35 hp but far outperforms that rating. It comes in a small package but has a big heart. It's an outstanding product that can compete with tractors twice its size."

**Fred Grieve, Flat Rock, Mich.:** Fred's happy with his 1939 **Sears Craftsman 8-in.** table saw. "This saw has had a lot of use over the last 65 years, which includes four generations of handymen. It still rips and makes miters like a new table saw. And, of course, it was made in the U.S."

**Blaine Taylor, Shippensburg, Penn.:** "A 2003 **Kioti LK 3054** tractor equipped with a **KL 1230** front-end loader is my worst buy. This tractor was delivered with all four

wheels loose and the loader improperly mounted. The dealer didn't respond to my pleas to repair some hydraulic leaks. Parts were missing, and there were no operator books available until I had already been using the machine for 30 days. Then I got a bunch of stuff like books, parts, and hydraulic fittings. The tractor has only 39 hours on it but they've probably spent 60 hours working on it. The dealer had the tractor for nine days doing repair work."

**Floyd Calkins, Cedar Springs, Mich.:** A 1990 **Dodge 250 2-WD** pickup equipped with a diesel engine rates as Floyd's "best buy." "I drove this pickup 505,050 miles before a deer smashed in one side of the vehicle and an old man drove into the other side. It was still running strong but I knew I would get almost nothing for it if I traded it in so I converted it into a mini Kenworth cargo truck. I



was hoping to get one million miles on this rig and had a spare 1993 engine ready to go in it.

The original engine had 927,000 miles on it and was still running good when my wife hit another deer with it. It took out the radiator. As a result, I had to replace the original engine. The replacement engine now has 298,000 miles on it and is still running strong. The original engine is setting in the corner of my garage. I'm thinking about converting it into a generator."

**Debo Jacks, Mountville, S.C.:** "This pickup is well made. The engine is quiet and has extraordinary power," says Debo about his 2003 **Dodge 2500** pickup equipped with a Cummins turbocharged diesel engine."

He nominates his 1999 **Chevrolet** Suburban as his "worst buy." "I've had problems with the window motor lock mechanisms, brakes, front-end, and alternator. In my opinion, Chevrolet makes the sorriest vehicles on the road. I wouldn't own another GM product if it was given to me."

**Darwin L. Tuttle, Bonners Ferry, Idaho:** "Excellent performance" is how Darwin describes his 1998 **Toyota Camry** equipped with a 4-cyl. engine and automatic transmission. "This car has more than 91,000 miles on it including a lot of short drives and some long trips. It has required no work other than routine maintenance and doesn't use any oil. It runs quiet and gets 33 to 37 mpg on the highway hauling a load and traversing mountain passes. It's an amazing vehicle that warms up quickly. I always use **Amsoil 5W-30** series 3000 synthetic engine oil in it. It's the best."

**John Billinger, Hill City, Kansas:** "My 1991 **GM S-15 4-WD** pickup equipped with a 4.3-liter, V-6 engine is my best buy. I bought it used in 1995 with 42,000 miles on it. Today it has more than 233,000 miles. One summer I hit two deer. Both times it cost more than \$3,000 for repairs to the front end. However, neither the engine nor the transmission have ever needed work. It's the best vehicle I've ever owned."

**David Kurtz, Shoemakersville, Penn.:** "It's an excellent machine for the money," reports David about his 2002 **Polaris 325** Magnum 4-wheeler ATV. "Dollar for dollar it has a better ride, more towing capacity, and a heavier rack weight rating than any other machine I've seen. It gets used every day and just sips fuel. I've had absolutely no trouble

with it, and if it ever does break down it's simple to work on. The gear range box is separate from the engine so I won't have to ever tear the engine down to work on the gearbox. And the belt drive system is easy to work on as well."

**Ben Parks, Austin, Texas:** "My 1979 **Ford F-250** pickup equipped with a 300 cu. in., 6-cyl. engine and 4-speed manual transmission is my best buy. It has almost 200,000 trouble-free miles on it and is economical to own. I sold it to my neighbor and bought a new 2003 **Ford F-250 4-WD** equipped with a 6-liter diesel engine and 6-speed manual transmission. It has worked fine so far and is more fuel efficient than the old F-250.

"My all-time worst buy is my 1984 **Cadillac DeVille**. The engine started smoking at 60,000 miles. I took the car to the dealer, who called me the next day to say the engine had to be replaced. I told them to stop work on the car, because I wanted to talk to them in person and see for myself why the engine had to be replaced. At the dealership I found the top of the engine had been taken apart and the camshaft was out, and I noticed the camshaft bearings were completely worn out. I've never seen an engine wear out that quick, and I'm very careful about regular vehicle maintenance and oil changes. I asked the head mechanic whether this engine was on a recall list, but he wouldn't give me a straight answer. Instead, he kept insisting I buy their replacement engine. I got angry and told him to put the engine back together, and that I would pay them only for a new gasket kit and keep the engine.

"As I left the service area, I saw a stack of junked Cadillac engines in back of the lot, and to top it off, I found out later that GM had a secret recall on these engines. I ended up swapping the engine with a 350 cu. in. engine equipped with a 4-barrel carbureted engine that came out of an Oldsmobile. Since then I've been able to drive the car many trouble-free miles, although the engine has needed some fuel system and electrical modifications. I find a Cadillac didn't have a nice coupe body I'd have junked it long ago."

**Robb R. Aswell, Corbin, Ky.:** "Our 2000 **Deere 6 x 4 Gator** is our best buy. We love to ride it around our farm and use it to haul feed and salt blocks to our cattle, and to haul firewood and fencing supplies. We wouldn't farm without it."

**Carl Bodinka, Spencerville, Ind.:** "My **EZ-Trail** gravity basket for hauling hay bales is my best buy (**E-Z Trail, Inc.**, P.O. Box 168, Arthur, Ill. 61911 ph 800 677-2802). It lets me bale small square bales by myself as fast as the baler will work, and I only have to handle the bales once to get them into the loft. The only problem is that I can't make a normal turn without breaking or jamming a bale. I solved the problem by using some chains and springs to guide the bales on turns. To unload, I just pull a lever to dump bales and in five minutes I'm done."

**K. Wayne Campbell, Brookville, Penn.:** "I read in one of your previous issues where someone bought an International Harvester refrigerator and freezer in 1956. I bought a 16 cu. ft. freezer from International Harvester in 1952 or 1953. It has been running ever since without a bit of trouble and has required no repairs. The paint on it isn't very good but it still runs fine. Too bad they don't make them any more."

**George C. Wissinger, Huntington, Ind.:** "My 1997 **New Holland 4835 4-WD** tractor equipped with a left hand reverser and an **ALO 720** front-end loader is my best buy. I use it to pull a **New Idea 485 4** by 6 hydraulic-tie round baler, which is also a best buy. I can't say enough good things about these two machines."