

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

become a best buy. I bought it with a broken hood and a bad magneto, but the price was right. It runs good and saves my back from a lot of raking."

Jeff Boothe, Walnut Ridge, Ark.: Jeff grows rice and soybeans and is impressed with his **Circle C** 53-ft., 30-wheel crop residue rake (ph 800 367-1847; www.superhaytoday.com). It's a larger version of the company's standard wheel rake. Company president Ivan Cook says as far as he knows it's the world's biggest rake. It's equipped with walking beams and rubber-encased tines with depth bands for constant contact with the ground. The rake teeth are in front of the depth band, adjusted to clear the ground yet gather stubble without picking up dirt and rocks.

Boothe grows soybeans on 2-ft. wide beds and uses the rake to gather soybean residue into windrows, which he then burns. "It works great. The rake cleans the ground without raking up clods and without putting pressure on the teeth. The walking beams allow the tines to follow the contour of the beds," says Boothe.

On the negative side, he lists his 48-ft. dia., 38,000-bu. **GSI** grain bin equipped with a 50 hp centrifugal fan. "We were able to operate the fan for only 5 days before the bearings went out, destroying the shaft. Five days later a work crew installed new bearings and rebuilt the shaft. We operated the fan for 5

"By that time the rice in the bin was ruined. We took a \$30,000 loss."

more days but then the fan ripped from the bin and flipped the motor. Five days later the crew installed a rebuilt fan. But later that day, I discovered the fan was installed backward. I called the company and 2 days later they installed a new, smaller fan, but by that time the rice in the bin was ruined. We took a \$30,000 loss."

Jim Johnson, Flesherton, Ont.: "My **Dove** Tec corn stove is poorly designed and often plugs up and stops working. I had to dismantle the stove just to remove the auger. The dealer came out and tried to fix it but couldn't. Our house had to be cleaned because of smoke damage."

Stan Whiles, Maple Creek, Sask.: "Even though my 2008 **Chevrolet** Colorado is a small pickup equipped with a 5-cyl. engine, it still gets only about 16 mpg."

Paul Zimmerman, Jr., Rutledge, Mo.: "My 2004 **New Holland** LS 170 skid loader runs good and can haul heavy loads. It has about 3,000 hours on it with no problems."

"I didn't use my 2005 **Makita** cordless drill very long before the gears stripped. Of course, the warranty had already expired."

Allan Kuhl, Desboro, Ont.: In 2005 Allan had a hip replaced due to arthritis and has worked with the **Breaking New Ground** Resource Center at Purdue University to find ways to help get his work done (ph 800 825-4254; www.workshop.agrability.org). The organization is a clearing house for information on commercially available products and homegrown ideas from farmers and ranchers designed for farmers with disabilities.

"With the help of this program I'm able to farm 355 acres with my wife and other family members and friends," says Allan.

James Doughtie, Bethel, N.C.: "My 1991 **Case** IH 7120 2-WD tractor has more than 13,000 hours on it. A piston ring failed at 4,000 hours, but the company rebuilt the

engine under warranty. That's the only major problem I ever had with this tractor."

Tom Ruffatto, Stevensville, Mont.: "My **Rupp** hydraulic-operated calf chute is my best buy (ph 712 261-1108). It works fast and smooth and is easy on calves. The company's customer service is great. We recently had a hydraulic problem with the chute, and owner Phil Rupp drove 1,150 miles one way to bring us a new chute. Their chutes make branding and working calves an easy job."

Roy Harrell, Yatesville, Ga.: "My best buy is an informative book I bought on Amazon.com called '**Your First Tractor**'. This book is described as 'the tractor buyers' protection guide' and was written by three brothers who were raised on a farm and have operated a tractor repair shop for more than 30 years. The book contains a lot of country humor to keep the reader interested. I think even city slickers would buy this book for the humor alone. Even my wife read it and enjoyed it immensely."

"The book not only helps you decide what size tractor you need to handle the jobs on your farm, but it also warns the prospective buyer about the pitfalls and 'gotchas' found in the tractors being sold today. It covers old and new tractors and explains which brands hold up best, which ones have readily available parts, and which ones have a decent resale value should you ever decide to sell."

"I was amazed to find that many popular American brand name tractors are really just poor quality tractors from India, China, or Eastern Europe."

"The book can save a prospective tractor buyer hundreds or even thousands of dollars in unexpected expenses by knowing what to look for, what to look out for, and how to safely and profitably maintain and operate a tractor."

Robert Trimbo, Vancouver, Wash.: "Robert's disappointed with his 2006 **Troy-Bilt** Super Bronco garden tractor. It hasn't made it through a season without a breakdown or engine problem. I had to replace assorted springs and belts. Now it needs a carburetor and is leaking oil. Fortunately, my 12-year-old **Sears** Craftsman riding mower is still running."

Aaron Marley, Nokomis, Ill.: Aaron uses a **McFarlane** Reel Disk to prepare his ground for no-till planting of both corn and soybeans.



"It's equipped with ultra-shallow concave disk blades that loosen the top 2 to 3 in. of the soil, yet leave a firm seedbed that ensures accurate seed depth at planting. The leading disk blades penetrate the soil and slice residue into manageable pieces. The disk has enough weight to force the no-till coulters into the ground deep enough to allow my planter to work at optimum depth."

"The gang angle can be set aggressive for more soil movement to bury residue or can be set passive to leave more residue on the surface. The disk is available in a 12-ft. wide rigid frame model, and in 20, 25, 30 and 44-ft. folding frame models."

Marvin Roemmick, Rapid City, S. Dak.: "The 2005 **Ford** F-250 4-WD pickup I bought used is my best buy. I use it as a farm/ranch vehicle, and my daughter uses it to go to horse shows, pulling a 4-horse trailer. Her



Virgil and Travis Pook fixed the one thing they didn't like about their **Ag Bagger** by equipping it with self-contained hydraulics.

Modified Ag Bagger Works Better Than Ever

Virgil and Travis Pook, Sumner, Iowa:

"We made our 6000 **Ag Bagger** a better buy with a 12-volt hydraulic rebuild. Where we once had to set jacks to reset the wheels from transit mode to fill mode, hydraulics now do it for us."

"We do custom bagging, and moving the wheels every time we set up is a hassle. With the independent hydraulics, we can do it in minutes."

"We mounted the pump, a tank and a battery pack to the side of the bagger. Three guided hydraulic cylinders, each on its own valve, have stand plates mounted on the ends of the rams. The individual valves let us raise and lower the bagger regardless of how uneven the ground is under it. We can

lift it right off the ground."

"The hydraulics also help for mounting bags. Without it, we have to wait for the farmer to show up with the tractor that will run the bagger. With our hydraulics pack, we can get all set up, so when the tractor arrives, we can start filling."

"We also use the on-board battery pack to control the feed auger. An electric lift with a control pad on a cable makes it easy to adjust the auger as needed."

"Powering the auger and recharging the battery pack is easy. Once the tractor is hooked to the bagger, we connect a cable to the tractor battery. When we finish for the day, the pack is ready to go for wheel reset and transit to the next farm."

tack alone weighs as much as two quarter horses. We've used this pickup to haul gravel, hay, and sawdust. It's a good pulling pickup, loaded or empty."

"In 1980 I bought a used 1953 **Ford** Golden Jubilee tractor and have used it for pushing snow, leveling dirt, and baling hay ever since I replaced the tires and a clutch."

Cindy Bentley, McArthur, Ohio: Cindy is impressed with her 2010 **Lil'House** outside wood heater (ph 417 581-7755; www.outsidewoodheater.com). "We live in a 3-bedroom block home with a full basement and have a newer model, propane furnace. It usually takes four 500-gal. tank fill-ups per year to heat the house to 68 degrees. We were spending a fortune on propane but still weren't warm. Then my husband and I bought the **Lil'House** heater and installed it ourselves. It came with clear, easy-to-understand directions so we were able to have it up and running in a day."

"We installed the heater duct directly into our dining room window, which is centrally located in our home. We brought the cold air return out of one of the basement windows. It was the first winter we actually stayed warm inside the house. There were days when the thermostat read 85 degrees. If it got too warm, I just opened a window, turned on a fan and praised God that I didn't have to pay for that heat. It was awesome. I never dreamed going out to put wood in the stove because I was looking at that propane tank knowing I wasn't having to pour money into it. My **Lil'House** heater paid for itself in the first year. I'd recommend it to anyone."

Bud Newton, Cochranville, Penn.: "My **Mantis** garden rototiller is my worst buy. When it was delivered to me it wouldn't start, and the company told me to take it to a

repair shop. However, the shop couldn't get it started and had to consult with the company. It has been in three different repair shops, but no one has been able to get it to run more than 15 min. Now it sits idle in my garage while I hand dig my wife's flower beds."

Al Kilburg, Zwingle, Iowa: "I like my 2010 **Kubota** M5040 tractor equipped with a front-end loader and cab. This tractor is easy to use in tight places, has adequate power for moving snow, and a good hydraulic system to handle wood that we use in our outside wood burning stove. I also bought a **Kubota** BX2360 tractor with belly-mounted mower. It works great to mow my lawn."

Ron Stoen, Lowry, Minn.: "My 2010 **Toyota** Tundra is the best pickup I've ever owned. I was always made fun of for buying a foreign truck but, low and behold, this truck was built right here in Texas."

"My **Country Clipper** zero-turn riding mower reduced my lawn mowing time by half and does a better job than any mower I've ever used. It's equipped with a tip-up deck."

Bernard Fehringer, Sidney, Neb.: "I like my early 2000's **New Holland** 595 big square baler, which I bought used with 3,000 bales on it. It makes 3 by 4-ft. bales. I'm sure the original owner traded this baler in because he couldn't make it work. The problem was he didn't keep it lubricated. The tucker fingers need regular greasing and are hard to see without consulting the operator's manual. Also, the autolubes use a lot of oil so you have to keep refilling the reservoir often. Ever since I fixed the problems and lubed this baler properly, it makes bales without a single missed tie or other malfunction."