

BUYING TIPS YOU CAN USE

Randomly selected farmers “tell it like it is” in nominating their “best” and “worst” buys.

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Farmers Nominate Best, Worst Buys

OPINION

Tell Us About Your “Best or Worst” Buy
Send your nominations to:
**FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029,
Lakeville, Minn. 55044, or use
the survey form on our website at
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Wayne & Gail Hopkins, Overbrook, Kan.: “Our 2005 Ford 1-ton pickup equipped with a Powerstroke 6.0 diesel has been a disaster,” says Wayne, who called recently to tell us his story. “We bought it new last August and had to replace the head gasket at 800, 1,200, and 1,800 miles. It spent 40 days in the shop during the first 15,000 miles. We haul hay for a living so that was a real problem for us. In fact, since buying this truck we figure we’ve lost about \$40,000 in business.

“We’ve been in touch with the Kansas attorney general and he said the 6.0 diesel is the worst case of product failure he’s ever seen. The engine was made by International, but Ford has been spending millions trying to keep them running.

“Our dealer was good to us, but it was when we started working with the next level up of Ford customer service that we had problems. They made lots of excuses and wouldn’t call us back. As time went on and we continued to work on this engine, we discovered that some of the portholes in the head for cooling fluid were not open. That’s apparently why it runs so hot. For example, you can’t keep

came up with my own design for the paint job. I repowered it with a Cummins 5.9 cu. in. diesel with a new Venture 4500 5-speed



manual overdrive. It has a Detroit rear end (4:10 gears) and I’m planning on installing either a 3-speed Browning box or a dual drive transmission. The only modification I had to make to the truck to install the Cummins engine was to install different motor mounts. However, I had to lift the body 2 in. to clear the Venture 4500. I also had to add one leaf to the front springs to handle the additional weight.”

Richard Vega, Lake George, N.Y.: “In response to the report by the British Columbia reader in the last issue who had trouble with his Classic outside wood furnace from Central Boiler, I have also had my share of misadventures. I had problems with it choking for air at startup for about 7 min. The air supply damper door is just about useless. With no adjustments, it lets in maximum air or next to none at all. When the fire settles to below the drop curtain, it runs correctly.

“To help solve the problem, I put a 6-in. stainless steel elbow in the ash door to provide more fresh air. Hardly any ash builds up in the chimney now.

“My stove must be a couple sizes bigger than that other reader since I can load it with 5-ft. oak logs. If the door were wider, I could put a 6-ft. pallet into it.

“At times the flames come out the door. I can’t let my wife or son run it at all and I’ve singed my hair and beard several times.”

Marvion Reichert, Elm Creek, Neb.: “I bought a New Holland CR940 combine two years ago and this machine has been nothing but trouble. Between myself and the dealer, we’ve put more than \$34,000 into it,” says Marvion. “We’ve had a tremendous amount of downtime. It just won’t keep running. Every time we get something fixed, something else goes wrong. We’re in the second year of the warranty so every service visit costs \$500. When I bought this machine, I figured the factory was just 50 miles away so they would be able to fix it. But the factory might as well be overseas for all the good it has done us.

“I’ve owned five New Holland combines and I have three tractors, a half dozen skid steer loaders, and other company equipment. So I’m a good customer but you could never tell that from the way they’ve treated me.

“The company wanted me to pay \$65,000 with a trade-in to get a replacement machine. I offered the equivalent of \$41,000 but they said no. We dickered around for 6 months with no result. Company officials kept saying they’d call me back but they didn’t. I finally looked up the name of the CEO and sent him a letter at his home address, explaining my situation. That really got the ball rolling and we settled on my original offer.

“Here’s how this company treated me: Lots of sympathy but no action. A very frustrating experience.”

Kevin Ihm, Barneveld, Wis.: “I’m extremely happy with the 20 custom-built gates we put in our new 300-stall dairy heifer barn a few months ago from Andy Tilleraas of County Line Welding in San Pierre, Ind.

“The heavy-duty gates come with a 5-year warranty and also have heavy, custom-made hinges. The hinge pins are 1 1/8-in. round steel bar. They’re strong enough that I think they’ll be lifetime gates. With the commer-

your feet on the floor of the passenger side because it’s so hot.

“We finally got the name of the national head of customer service for Ford. My wife, Gail, called Detroit and was actually put through to his voice mail. She left a long message about the pickup and the poor customer service we were receiving from his regional managers. We figured that would be the end of it, but three hours later we got a call from Ford saying they’d buy the pickup back from us. It took 6 weeks to work out the final details but in the end they finally wrote us a check for the full retail price of \$35,000, even though we had only paid \$28,000. They also paid for the flatbed we had put on it, and some other accessories, for a total of \$38,246. During the time we were working out the deal, they fixed the pickup one more time and asked us to give it another try. They guaranteed we’d be happy this time. We said we’d do it if it wouldn’t void our buy-back deal. We didn’t get 50 miles out of town before the fuel pump went out. We think the fuel pump, and other parts, had been damaged by the high heat put out by this engine.

“Ford spent a lot to remedy this situation, especially if you add up all the hotel and travel expenses they had to pick up over the past year for us. They did everything they could to make us go away but we kept working away at them.

“My wife and I would be happy to help anyone else who’d like advice on how to handle a bad situation with Ford. Write us at 51 E 550th Rd., Overbrook, Kan. 66524 or call at 785 255-4579.”

Robert E. Bakki, Republic, Wash.: “I’m very proud of my rebuilt 1985 Chevy Crew Cab. I’ve worked on it for years and now it’s almost done. The interior is new and I