

cial gates we've had in the past, we've needed to replace hinges after a few years and the gates get bent. These gates are strong enough, that if you stand on the side of the gate where



the chain is, it doesn't move - but other types of gates sag. I also like the custom widths that these gates offer. I also bought some bifold gates from County Line that make it much easier when moving animals around. The chain latches are 1/4-in. log chains with a large steel gusset, and a 12-ft. gate weighs around 200 lbs. County Line Welding installed them, too, and price-wise, I don't think these gates were much different than other gates."

Gerald Wanderi, Perham, Minn.: Gerald says his best buy is the 595 **Buhler** loader he uses on his 6610 Ford FWA tractor. "It's really built well. I got it when I replaced my Ford 777 loader, which was breaking up and not built as strong. I especially like the Buhler because of the quick-tach part of it. Most of the framework comes off, so it's much easier to work on the tractor when you need to."

John H. Ruehter, Pleasant Hill, Mo.: "My 2003 **Case IH MX** tractor has been trouble-free. It has a lot of power and is comfortable to operate. The cab is nice and quiet with good controls.

"My **Vermeer 504** round baler makes a nice, tight bale. Bale density is the same from start to finish, so you get more hay per bale."

Terry Whitney, Delavan, Minn.: "It'll cut any kind of mild steel, from 28 ga. roofing steel to 1-in. bar stock," reports Terry about his portable **Milwaukee 8-in.** metal cold cut saw. "The thicker the metal you're cutting, the slower you go to keep the motor from overheating. Cutting with this saw creates very few sparks and a burr-free cutting edge.

"My **Deere LX277** riding mower is my worst buy. The tractor itself works fine, but not the mower deck. The deck is suspended from the tractor which creates a very uneven job of cutting. I tried using new blades and adjusting the gauge wheels according to the owner's manual, but nothing helped. Putting the correct air pressure in the tires didn't help, either."

Ronald Mantila, Pelkie, Mich.: "It's rugged and well built," says Ronald, pleased with his **Kawasaki Mule 610 4-WD** utility vehicle. "It's equipped with a 401 cc single cylinder engine and has a lot of power in both low and high range. It has selectable 2 or 4-WD with rear differential lock. I've used this machine for making firewood and have even used it to skid some trees. The dump box on back comes in handy for hauling wood and other material."

John Wenner, Atkinson, Neb.: "My 1953 **Ford Jubilee** is the most reliable tractor I've ever owned. I use it to mow, rake, doze, plow, disk, and harrow. This year I mounted **Bombardier** half-tracks on it, which makes the tractor work even better."

Lonnie J. Gribble, Winfield, W. Va.: Lonnie likes his **DR** walk-behind mower equipped with an 8 hp gas engine. "This machine is lightweight and rides on big wheels so I can maneuver it close to buildings, barbed wire fences, steep banks, and through trees. It reduces the need to use a trimmer."

E. Clinton Williams, Jr., Sumerduck,

Va.: He's impressed with his 1986 **Deere 185** riding mower equipped with a 38-in. deck, **Kawasaki 17 hp** engine, and hydrostatic transmission. "Mowing grass is a job that interferes with other, more fun activities, and I have little patience for working on mowers. So I was willing to pay a premium price for what I hoped was a premium machine that I could haul in my compact pickup. The engine has never missed a beat and still doesn't use any oil, and the deck is in great shape. The few parts that I've needed, such as belts and bearings, are always available from my local dealer. This mower has required only routine maintenance and has outlasted four of my friend's discount store brands. It's definitely a best buy."

Bud Ahlman, Wallace, Kansas: A 1963 **Deere 4010** tractor, which he bought used 15 years ago, rates as Bud's "best buy". "I've used this tractor to mow, do loader work, and to feed cattle during the winter. I haven't spent a penny on it other than batteries and other routine stuff. The amazing thing is that it's worth more today than it was when it was new.

"I put about 190,000 miles on my 1992 **Chevrolet Suburban** and never touched the engine. The bad news was that I had to replace the transmission four times."

Gerald H. Covell, Lombardy, Ontario: "It has exceeded all my expectations," says Gerald about his 2005 **Arctic Cat 400** ATV equipped with an automatic transmission, locking differential, and 2 or 4-WD. "It has enough power to perform all our chores, and more. I use it with a blade to clean out my horse stalls and paddock. No problems."

Burnell Gaskins, Nisland, S. Dak.: "I like my 2000 **Ford Ranger** quad door 4-WD pickup, which I bought used about 1 1/2 years ago. I really like **Ford Rangers**. I've owned three of them since 1988 and all have been dependable. They're all equipped with V-6 engines and 5-speed transmissions, and they all average about 19 mpg, which I think is pretty good. We live out in the country so most of the time we drive on dirt and paved roads, not freeways."

Scott Mackenzie, East Dorset, Vt.: "I own a small 4-acre blueberry farm and have tried every device on the market to keep birds out of my blueberries," says Scott, who likes the hawk decoy he bought from **Irish Mountain Orchard** (Elysian, Minn. ph 507 243-3462). "Before I bought this I tried balloons,

noise makers, and shiny tapes without success. This decoy was put up as instructed when our berries started to turn color, and the next day all the birds that were in the area took off and never came back."

The metal unit is designed to scare pest birds and also attract wild hawks. It hangs from a pole and requires no propane or batteries. The company says the decoy is effective against robins, flickers, and other birds that aren't scared by noise. It can protect an area five to six acres in size. It sells for \$35 plus \$5 S&H.

"I can't tell you how much money I've saved by not having birds pick my berries. It's the best \$40 I've spent in a long time."

Ralph Petersen, Sardis, Ohio: Ralph's had problems with the quick hitch on his **Kubota** tractor's loader bucket. "The first time I used it, it bent. The second time, it



Advice From A Corn Stove Owner

By Andrea Johnson

In December, 2004, my husband and I installed a corn stove on the main floor of our two story home. Since then, I've learned a lot about heating with corn.

Corn stoves are not the answer for everyone, but I do think they could work well for many farmers and farm families.

Here's what I see as the advantages of operating a corn stove:

- You raise the corn, so there's plenty of corn. It feels good to use corn to heat your house.
- You can heat your house to 70 degrees and not feel guilty about it.
- You can save money, based on how often you use your corn stove.
- Corn stoves work really well if someone is in or around the house all day.

Here are some of the things you have to plan for to use a corn stove:

- You make a commitment when you decide to burn corn. It's a little like owning a puppy - you have to clean up after it. At a minimum, the clinkers should be cleaned out of the fire pot every day. You also have to make sure the air holes are cleaned out to keep the fire going strong. I use gloves, steel wool, glass cleaner, a large nail, a wet/dry vacuum and paper towels every day to clean our stove. We bought a little case where we store everything near the stove. We use about a bushel of corn daily plus a half cup of wood pellets to help get the fire going.
- You have to come up with a way to store and move corn. We put corn in large plastic totes that weigh about 60 lbs. and carry them into our home one at a time as needed. We use a two-quart pitcher to refill the stove's bin. It's not that hard.



Andrea Johnson and her husband have learned a lot about operating their corn stove.

- Corn stoves need air. A small fan runs continuously while the stove is on to keep the airflow going. If your electricity goes off, you need a battery or generator to run the fan to still have heat.
- Some communities have special requirements about the location of your stovepipe and stove. You also need heat-resistant flooring under the stove.
- The more you learn before installing a corn stove, furnace or boiler, the happier you'll be with the outcome.

Are corn stoves for everyone? No, but unless things change drastically, the Johnson house will continue to heat with corn.

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broke. The dealer replaced it but it bent again. I had to use a sledge hammer to remove the bucket that time. The dealer wouldn't replace it or refund my money. I ended up cutting it apart and rewelding it."

Walter Bunt, Thunder Bay, Ontario: "My 2004 **Chevrolet 1/2-ton, 2-WD** pickup is my best buy. I'm pleased with how it tows a 20-ft. RV trailer. This vehicle is pushed to its limit whenever I travel into the mountains. It gets about 10 mpg climbing mountains and 12 to 13 mpg on the prairie."

James Morey, Middle Brook, Mo.: "Over the last two years, I've had excellent results with a pair of **Briggs & Stratton Intek** Series small gas engines. I use a 5 1/2 hp on my **Oscar 28** sawmill and an 8 hp model on a **Brave** log splitter. I use both the sawmill and the log splitter intermittently, sometimes going three or four months without starting them. These engines always start easy and run smooth."

D.F. Raube, Ceres, Calif.: "Without a doubt our best buy is our **Kawasaki Mule 500** utility vehicle. It has a bench seat that's easy to get on and off. The bench seats two people side by side. It's far superior to other utility vehicles where you have to climb over to get onto the seat, like getting on a horse or motorcycle. It's also much more convenient to use for small jobs and errands than a full-sized pickup or tractor and trailer."

Ken Larson, Baudette, Minn.: "I like my 1998 **Dodge 3500 1-ton** dually pickup equipped with an extended cab. When empty it gets about 20 mpg, which I think is pretty good in these times of high fuel prices. Pulling a large camper it gets 13 to 14 mpg. For a 1-ton pickup it has a very comfortable ride and is stable, with plenty of power. The newer pickup models are definitely quieter, but I already have a car."

Brad Rip, Sunnyside, Wash.: "My 1994 **Case IH 7120** tractor was my best buy ever.

We put more than 16,000 hours on the original engine and transmission. Although this tractor did have its share of oil leaks over the years, it required no major repairs. The **Cummins** diesel engine worked great. It had a lot of power and was fuel efficient."

Lois Hilaman, Wakeman, Ohio: "Our **Deere 5520** tractor equipped with a front-end loader is our best buy. We use it for many chores around our farm, and even at home to paint the house and wash windows."

Dennis A. Graham, Niota, Tenn.: "My **Bush Hog 3210 10-ft.** rotary cutter is my best buy. It's built strong, runs quiet, pulls easily, and cuts evenly on hills. It can cut anywhere from 2 to 12 in. high. I like the constant velocity joint on the pto shaft."

Herbie Bindseil, Floresville, Texas: "My 2005 **Case IH JX95 4-WD** tractor equipped with a cab is my best buy. It's a great tractor for haying. It has a lot of power, is fuel efficient, comfortable to operate, and cost effective."

John R. Johnson, Paradise, Montana: John bought front tires for his 1948 tractor from **M.E. Miller Tire Co.** and is happy with them (Wauseon, Ohio ph 419 335-7010). "These tires are a hard-to-find size. They're quality-built Firestones, and they're reasonably priced. I really like the way this company does business."

Allen Gillespie, Audubon, Minn.: Allen nominates his 28 by 40-ft. double wide **Holly Park** mobile home as his "worst buy". "The workmanship on this building is a disaster. The floor isn't fastened down - they missed the joists by as much as six inches. Instead of using nails, they used light wire staples. The wiring in the house isn't heavy enough to operate a window air conditioner, and the inside doors are too small for the frames. The dealer was supposed to set the building up, but they didn't put all the supports under the (Continued on next page)