

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

Robert F. McGinnis, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: "My best buy is my **Magnatrac 5000** compact crawler tractor powered by a 25 hp Kohler 'V' twin-cylinder engine. The engine has a computer ignition system, an independent oil cooling and filtering system, and nickel-silicon plated cylinder bores. It meets all current anti-pollution standards. The tractor has heavy-duty hydraulic drive systems to handle the extra power from the engine. The hydraulic system has its own replaceable filter and its own cooling radiator, along with a 15-gal. hydraulic oil tank. The transmission also has an overdrive so I can increase ground speed in forward or reverse if I want.

"I did have one problem with the tractor. The original gas tank holds just three gallons which allowed me to go for only about three hours before I had to refuel. To solve the problem I mounted another 3-gal. tank on the left fender, ahead of the original one, and hooked them together."

George Darby, Petersburg, Ky.: George nominates his **Taylor** outdoor wood burning furnace as his "best buy" (Taylor Mfg. Inc., Box 518, Elizabethtown, N.C. 28337 ph 800 545-2293 or 910 862-2576). "We use it with low-grade wood to heat our greenhouse, house, and hot water system. It has a large firebox that eliminates the need to split the wood into small pieces. There's no mess in the house and no danger of fire or carbon monoxide, either."

Rob Van Deren, Dillon, Montana: "Our **Landa** hot water pressure washer puts out 4 gpm at 3,500 psi and is convenient to use - just hook it up to a source of water. It has a lot of power and will strip grease, dirt and loose paint off easily. The hot water really cleans everything up.

"My **Drill Doctor** drill sharpener is my worst buy. It sharpens about 1/4 to 1/3 of the drill bits 'backward', so that the cutting edge is the lowest spot instead of the highest spot as it should be."

Elvin Agnew, Steele, N. Dak.: Elvin's a dealer for **Westfield** augers and says the company's 1999 MK 100 by 61 G swingaway auger is a "best buy". "This auger does what it's supposed to do without one ounce of trouble. It'll easily move 6,000 bu. per hour. It's very user friendly."

Larry Poole, Summerfield, N.C.: "I'm well pleased with my **Kubota 7030 4-WD** tractor. I've put more than 1,800 hours of hard work on it and all I've had to replace were a couple of batteries."

Allan Davidson, Finksburg, Md.: "Our 2000 **Rhino TW 120** rotary mower is a well-

"This auger does what it's supposed to without one ounce of trouble."

built machine with large gearboxes and a heavy duty drive line. It does a good job of mowing pastures and chopping crop residue.

"Our 1998 **United Farm Tools** no-till grain drill is equipped with a weight transfer system that uses the lift cylinder to put downpressure on the no-till coulters. However, in hard ground the drill's rear wheels are raised which results in poor seed placement. To solve the problem I added two tanks to the rear of the drill and filled them with water. Now it does a good job seeding."

Ed Martens, Killarney, Manitoba: Ed's the pleased owner of a 1981 **Deere 4440** tractor. "We've never touched the engine even though it has more than 8,000 hours on it. It doesn't use any oil and runs just as good now as the day we bought it.

"My 1994 **Convey All** drill fill auger is poorly designed and is my worst buy. The slide cover that's used to clean out fertilizer was difficult to move and had a weak handle that would bend. As a result I had to use a hammer to close the slide."

Kevin Kai, Wakefield, Neb.: Kevin nominates his **Gnuse** scoop as his "best buy" (Gnuse Mfg., 98 W. Elkhorn St., Arlington, Neb. 68002 ph 402 478-4433). "It's a 12-ft. wide bucket that mounts on the 3-pt. hitch. It has a cutting edge that's 1 in. thick and 8 in. wide. The bucket hinge point is just behind the cutting blade. I've hooked it up to my 200 hp front wheel assist tractor and used it to push snow, dirt, concrete and trees with no damage. It's well-built."

Richard Pero, Oswego, N.Y.: "My 1999 **Jeep Grand Cherokee** is my best buy. It has a V-8 gas engine that's fuel efficient. I've got about 36,000 miles on it.

"My 1998 **Chevrolet 1500 4-WD** pickup is my worst buy. When it was new the front end was so far out of alignment the tires wore out at only 450 miles. The dealer said it needed more miles on it before the company would let them adjust the alignment. The front brakes had to be replaced at 4,000 miles and again at 16,000 miles so I drive it as little as possible. No more GM pickups for me."

Wes Kentch, Ferndale, Wash.: Wesley likes his 2000 **New Holland 1412** discbine and 1998 **McHale 991 B** round bale wrapper. "Both machines have performed flawlessly. We custom mow, bale, and wrap hay and haylage bales. The New Holland discbine cuts fast and clean. Last year we used it to cut more than 300 acres with no problems and on one set of knives. We used the McHale wrapper to wrap more than 500 4-ft. haylage bales from July to November. I highly recommend both machines.

"Our primary farm tractors are 27 years old and still work great. Only one has been overhauled, at less than 10,000 engine hours. My biggest disappointment is the inability to get repair parts for perfectly good older machinery. We've had to spend a great deal of time retrofitting or researching used parts that will work."

Harold L. Bolt, Lynden, Wash.: Harold says his **Ovatec** premium electronic breeding instrument is his "worst buy". "I tried it on a mare so I would know when to breed her with cooled semen. First I got a reading which, according to the booklet, indicated that she would be in heat or have an infection. I had the mare checked by a veterinarian and he said that neither was true. When the mare did come in heat the Ovatec could not detect it. The company offered a 100 percent refund for up to one year. I purchased the product last March and returned it in May, but I still haven't received a refund. When I try to call the company I only get a message machine and they never call back."

Oscar Haake, Wellington, Colo.: "My 1995 **Dodge** pickup equipped with a Cummins diesel engine is my best buy. It has more than 200,000 miles on it. Easy on fuel and trouble-free.

"My **Buick Park Avenue** car has a good ride, but I think GM could do a better job considering what this car cost."

Do Robot Mowers Really Work?

FARM SHOW first reported on robot mowers back in 1993 after spotting one at the SIMA show in Paris (Vol. 17, No. 1). As far as we know, we were the first North American publication to run a story on them.

Several versions of the mower are now on the market around the world. Even U.S. mower giant Toro has a robot mower this year.

Consumer Reports magazine recently put one of the robot mowers through its paces.

The Robomow from Friendly Robotics measures 25 in. wide, 36 in. long, and operates on two 12-volt rechargeable batteries. It weighs 78 lbs. You run a wire around the perimeter of your lawn. On-board sensors detect the wire and also sense obstructions like buildings and trees, automatically changing direction to work around them. Basically, the mower "grazes" your yard like a sheep, working its way quietly over the enclosed area.

At a suggested retail of \$795, the Robomow is comparable in price to a top-of-the-line walk-behind mower.

Here's what Consumer Reports found when they tested the Robomow:

"First, the good points: The Robomow is relatively easy to set up. Its battery-powered signal prevents it from wandering off. You move the mow-bot out of your garage and onto your lawn using a remote control. Then, you press a button and, after a digital trumpet fanfare, it's off and running. The manufacturer says it's especially good for seniors or those who find it hard to operate a regular mower. It's quiet, too.

"But there are drawbacks:

"The robot is s-l-o-w. It took an hour to mow an area 35 by 35 ft., and 2 1/2 hrs. to mow a 50 by 50-ft. area. Using a gasoline



push mower, it took us 7 and 12 min., respectively. Also, you're supposed to keep an eye on your robot. This can get tedious.

"The mower misses patches - roughly 5 percent of your lawn. If your teenager did a comparable job, you'd send him or her back to redo the work. The manufacturer advises you to simply mow the lawn more often with the Robomow, but considering the time involved, it could become your second job. Also, it cuts in random patterns, which will bother people who like a neat-looking lawn.

"Its lead-acid battery supplies power for only about 2 1/2 hrs. and then requires a 24-hr. recharge.

"While it's fun to dream, there are better choices than the Robomow. These include cheaper push mowers and cordless electric mowers. Or just buy a comparably priced self-propelled mower that's easy to start and operate and that cuts better to boot. Or hire the kid next door."

You can read more at www.consumerreports.org, or call 1-800-208-9696.

For more information on the Robomow, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Friendly Robotics, 1414 W. Walnut Hill Lane, Irving, Tex. 75038 (ph 888-404-7626; Web site: www.friendlyrobotics.com).

Michael Harper, Greenwood, Mo.: "My **Kubota L2550** tractor is the most versatile and toughest piece of equipment I've ever owned. I've used it to retrieve my **Deere 2630** tractor from places where that tractor was helpless. I like my little Kubota so much that I bought a new 90 hp model.

"When my pickup's 6.9-liter diesel engine went bad I replaced it with a 1992 7.3-liter **Navistar** diesel engine. It's my worst buy. I made repeated calls to Navistar and whenever I would read the engine serial number to someone there they would get evasive. I finally found out that it was a new engine that had been scrapped by the Navistar plant but somehow found its way to a local company. This engine is junk, but there's nothing that I can afford to do about it."

Max Crisp, Dell Rapids, S. Dak.: "Our 2001 **Chevrolet LT 1/2-ton** four-door pickup is our best buy. We're well satisfied with its looks, ride, and fuel efficiency."

Bob Grenzow, Sumas, Wash.: Bob owns a **Dodge 3500** pickup equipped with a Cummins high-output diesel engine and 6-speed transmission. "The HO engine has a lot more power than the previous one I had. The engine revs higher and has a much better torque curve. The 6-speed transmission is a dream when pulling a trailer. The gears are spaced just right. When pulling a trailer in the mountains, I can now accelerate whereas before I had to downshift."

Eric D. Twito, Waynesboro, Va.: After reading about **Red Tek 12a** refrigerant for air conditioners in FARM SHOW, Eric decided to try the product. He says it's his "best buy" (Mel Brown Farm Supply, Box 580, Johnstown, Colo. 80534 ph 970 587-2249). Red Tek 12a is a replacement for 134a and other R-12 substitutes. "The air conditioner in my 1991 Volvo 240 car was leaking out all the refrigerant about every four months. About five months ago I put in one can of Red Tek 12a and one can of Leak Stop. The air conditioner now puts out much colder air than I can stand and the leaks have stopped. It's an economical product to use. The product mixes with the R-12 refrigerant that's already in the air conditioner system so there's no need to vacuum it out. The company sends you everything you need. I paid \$7.95 for the Leak Stop and \$7.95 for the Red Tek 12a. I also paid \$21.95 for an R/12 adapter fitting. I'm really happy with this product."

Fred Dunlevy, Greenfield, Ind.: "The reconditioned work clothes I bought from **Walt's Wholesale Co.** are my worst buy. This is the worst company I've ever done business with. I ordered three lined work coats from them but they only sent one. Every time I called the company they promised they would send the rest of the coats out right away. After a year I finally gave up."