

Farmers Nominate Best & Worst Buys

"My worst buy was my **Poulan Pro** riding mower. After just 10 min. of use it started smoking, and pieces of cloth came flying out from underneath. The grass wasn't even 6 in. tall, yet a deck belt got shredded to pieces. We returned the mower and got a full refund."

Roger Ezell, Perry, Fla.: "I'm happy with the 1998 **Farmtrac 60** tractor I bought used in 2014. I paid about \$25,000 for it. It was in tough shape and needed extensive repairs, but now it's a very reliable tractor with a lot of power. It looks like a Ford tractor, and many parts for it are interchangeable."

"My **New Holland TL90** tractor has been a disappointment. It has a lot of power and I love the way it handles, but something is always going wrong on it. The problems are mainly with the fuel system and the electrical wiring."

Lanny Merritt, Oak Grove, Ala.: "My 2019 **Ryobi 40-volt** string trimmer and 40-volt chainsaw both work great and have a long battery life. They do a good job of handling my yard work and are easy on my ears."

Ron Schupbacher, Brodhead, Wis.: "I bought a **KingKutter 3-pt.** mounted rough cut mower at Northern Tool and use it with my **Deere 2025** tractor. It works good on tall, tough weeds and brush, but it's not a true bush hog so I have to be careful not to overdo it."

"In the past I purchased a fair amount of merchandise from **Northern Tool**, but not anymore. I ordered a log grappling hook and also a cover for my lawn tractor. I received the grappling hook but not the cover. I called the company numerous times over 2 months, but they just passed the buck from one person to another. No one ever told me why I never got the cover or got a refund on my credit card."

Neal Baker, Knoxville, Penn.: A **Pittsburgh** tubing roller purchased from Harbor Freight rates as Neal's "worst buy". "I was able to make only 4 tubing bends with it before set screws on the machine's middle drive wheel stripped out. I drilled a hole and inserted a bolt through it to keep the machine going, even though it didn't work great. I was able to make only 5 more bends before the threads on the top block stripped out, making the roller useless. The entire tool is built too light. The company says no replacement parts are available, and that I'll have to source any parts locally."

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Lee deVries, Crawfordville, Oregon: "Last March I bought a new **Bad Boy Rogue** zero-turn riding mower equipped with a 61-in. deck. It replaced my 1966 IH Cub Low-Boy equipped with a 60-in. belly-mount deck. My mowing time is now less than half what it used to be, and my lawn also looks better. Nothing seems to slow this machine down."

"I spent a couple years checking out mowers at farm shows and nearby dealers before choosing this one. I think it's built better than anything else on the market. The suspension system provides a smooth ride, and the deck is built out of 1/4 and 3/8-in. thick steel."

"I had my choice of 5 different engines for this mower, and I picked the 35 hp. Kawasaki 999cc engine. I also bought several extra features including a power deck lift, adjustable air suspension seat, hard top cover, storage basket, assist handle, and trailer hitch. I also bought an advanced chute system, which I really like. With the flip of a

lever, a cover drops over the mower's chute so I can keep clippings off anything that I'm driving past, such as a flower bed. As soon as I've passed the area of concern I can flip the cover back up. I also ordered chrome wheel covers and chrome tips for the mower's dual exhaust pipes. No problems so far. I couldn't be happier with this mower."

Bruce and Gaile Woods, Holdenville, Okla.: "Our 'best buy' is our 2005 **Ford F-150** pickup equipped with a 5.4-liter Triton engine. We bought it used with about 28,000 miles, and now it has more than 410,000 miles even though it pulls a 16-ft. utility trailer at least 25 percent of the time. All we've replaced are the alternator, fan clutch, battery, front wheel bearings, a couple sets of brakes, 2 sets of spark plugs, and a small grommet in the windshield washer tank."

"The engine still runs great without using any oil, and the transmission still shifts smooth. The pickup also drives straight, without any shaking or rattling. In the past I was a huge GM fan, but after our experience with this pickup we bought a new 2015 F-150 equipped with a 5.0-liter engine. It already has more than 200,000 miles on it, and all we've replaced are the battery and starter. The electronics on it still work great."



E. Anderson, Union, Maine: "Several years ago we bought a **Waterwise 3200** countertop water distiller (www.waterwise.com; ph 800 874-9028). We live in an area with naturally occurring arsenic in our groundwater, as well as other unwanted minerals. Until we bought this distiller we had to purchase all the water we used for cooking and drinking in plastic bottles that cost almost \$1 per gal. It got expensive and we had to get rid of all the bottles. The Waterwise can crank out a gallon of water every few hours. It cost well under \$400 and has exceeded our expectations."

"After a few years a minor problem developed so I called the company. They said some other customers had the same problem, and told me to send the unit in even though the warranty had expired. A few weeks later a brand new distiller appeared on my front porch. You can't ask for better customer service than that."

Jody Lagerquist, Westby, Mont.: "The **LockJawz** plastic T-post fence insulators we bought about 2 years ago don't always stay on the post. Of those that do, some are breaking now because ultraviolet light has degraded the plastic."

John Zychski, Cottrellville Township, Mich.: "In 1980 I bought a used 1967 **Wheel Horse 857** garden tractor equipped with a 36-in. mower, and it still runs great. The blades and battery have been replaced, but otherwise this tractor has required only routine maintenance."

"I also bought a used 1953 **Ford Jubilee** tractor in 1980 that's still going strong. I've replaced 2 water pumps and tires and batteries. These tractors just won't quit."



Macklenburg uses the weed zapper on his own crops to kill tall growing weeds and also does custom work for other organic farmers.

"Best Buy" Weed Zapper

Joel Mecklenburg, Wawaka, Ind.: "The **Weed Zapper** (Vol. 42, No. 6) is a definite game changer for organic farmers. If it's used properly at the right time, it can save a field and really decimate weeds. It's fantastic to see the results as you treat the field. When it gets close to high moisture weeds like poke weed, you get big lightning bolts and instant results. It produces an awesome lightning show when you get into heavy ragweed."

"I have my 30-ft. wide bar on an 8360RT John Deere. With more than 300 hp., it handles the 200,000-watt generator pretty well. I think you could power it with a smaller 200 hp. tractor, but it would just crawl. The bigger the tractor, the faster you can go."

"Treating early provides the best results. When weeds are 9 to 12 in. tall, you can get them quickly. If you have 6-ft. tall weeds in

a field of soybeans, it takes a lot of energy to control them."

"I use it on my own fields and to do custom weed control for other organic growers in Indiana and into Ohio, Illinois and Michigan. This year I had a fixed rate per acre, but next year I plan to offer a reduced rate on a second visit if they tell me when their beans are in the ground. Then I can make control happen on a timely basis. The second pass will be faster, smoother and take less fuel."

"Working with Ben, Nicole and his dad Tony at Old School Manufacturing has been awesome. It's still new technology, and there are a couple of bugs to be worked out, but they're great to work with. They stand behind the product 100 percent (www.theweedzapper.com; ph 660 851-8800)."

Bob Moty, Crystal Lake, Ill.: "I don't recommend using **Great Stuff**, a foam insulation that comes in an aerosol can. It comes out of the can tackier than glue and dries harder than cement. There's no solvent I know of that will cut through it."

"If I try to insulate the area between a door jamb and the stud, the foam expands with such force as it cures that it pulls 12-penny nails right out of the wood. The expanding foam will force the jamb against the door so tight that the only way to ever get the door open again is to dig out all the insulation in order to relieve the pressure."

"If you accidentally get this product on carpeting, linoleum, wood or glass and it dries, you'll just have to live with it. I call it cancer in a can."

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Carl Davis, Brookneal, Va.: "I'm totally satisfied with my 2016 **Dodge Ram 1500 EcoDiesel** pickup. It has a lot of torque and is super fuel efficient. It also handles trailers with ease."

On the worst buy side, he lists his **ShopSeries 1/2-in.** cordless drill. "This is a weak drill with very poor battery life, and the battery kept getting weaker until I was only able to drive 6 to 8 deck screws on a single charge. Within 6 mos. the battery wouldn't charge at all. A total waste of money."

Ray Robinson, Brighton, Ill.: "I like all of my **Sears Craftsman 20-volt** cordless tools which include drills, a leaf blower, weed trimmer, and reciprocating saw. All these tools have great battery life, and the drills have a lot of torque."

"The **Hart** saw blades I bought at Walmart

get dull too fast."

Andrew R. Pope, Chatham, Va.: Andrew's impressed with his 2015 **Kubota RTV-X1120** utility vehicle equipped with a diesel engine. "It has plenty of power, and a hydrostatic transmission that's smooth and provides engine braking whenever I release the throttle. When you consider the high payload capacity, I think this is the best utility vehicle out there."

On the negative side, he lists his 2019 **Vermeer 504R** Signature round baler. "The dealer reviewed everything on this baler with me after the purchase. Once I got home, I noticed the sprocket that drives the rotor and pickup had excessive runout. The sprocket is bolted to a hex shaft on one end of the stripper roll. I used a dial indicator to measure the runout of the shaft and found that it had 0.035 in. runout. Also, the bearing mounting plate was flexing 0.010 in."

"The dealer ordered a new stripper roll and sent a mechanic to help me install it. The hex shaft on the new stripper roll measured 0.015, which was still more than I would like but better than before."

"The stripper roll was replaced under warranty. The Vermeer rep told the dealer that I was the only one with this problem, which I find hard to believe. If your Vermeer 504R baler is wearing out bearings on the right side of the stripper roll, you might have the same problem."

"The next problem I had to tackle was the design of the windguard on the crop pickup. Under certain conditions, such as when the pickup drops into a low spot while baling thick hay, the windguard gets pushed into the stripper roll. I was sent a set of check chains to keep this from happening, but it didn't help. Then, I removed 5 in. from the end of each finger on the windguard and the problem was solved."

"This baler is well built, but I shouldn't have to fix new equipment like I did."