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Parts Business Keeps Wranglers Running

Martin’s Maintenance is the place to go to find parts for older Willmar Wrangler loaders. Marvin Martin has built a parts-sourcing business around the front-end materials handlers. The handy wheeled loaders are popular with fertilizer dealers, tree care operators, dairy farmers, and feed mills.

“I had worked with Deutz engines like those that power the Wrangler,” says Martin. “A customer needed a part, and his dealer said the part was obsolete. I had a lot of parts, so I decided to specialize in the older Wrangler loaders.”

The older yellow Wranglers were built

from the 1980’s into the late 2000’s. They include the Massey Ferguson 7500 loader that’s identical to the yellow Wranglers. AGCO discontinued the machines entirely in 2013, and an increasing number of parts are being listed as obsolete by the company. Even AGCO dealers are now turning to Martin at a time when demand for parts has risen.

“They need parts as the machines age. At the same time, the older ones are often preferred over new loaders with more electronics and emissions controls. We also have people seeing that the older Wranglers are cheap, but they need parts to keep them running,” says Martin.

Wranglers are well-built machines that have better visibility than skid steers and don’t mess up concrete floors. In his mind, they have only one flaw and that’s where most are used.

“If not for fertilizer corrosion, we wouldn’t even see these machines in the shop,” says Martin. “Our biggest selling components are those exposed to fertilizer, such as final drives, hydraulic pumps, motors, and electronic parts. Radiators are made from aluminum, and fertilizer takes them.”

Martin has a list of more than 50 suppliers, many of whom previously supplied AGCO, such as Eaton and Bosch Rexroth. When AGCO discontinues a part, Martin goes as far up the ladder as he can to buy directly from the manufacturer. This can reduce costs, but working with them can be a challenge, he notes.

“We’ve had to wait as much as a year for an order to be delivered,” says Martin.

In some cases, a part was proprietary to AGCO for the Wrangler. This is when he turns to salvaged parts or remanufactured parts.

“When we can’t find parts, we manufacture the more expensive parts like final drives,” says Martin. “In the case of a forward/reverse

electric switch, we found a part used in a different application and 3D printed a piece that let us use it in a Wrangler.”

Martin got into remanufacture early, having throttle cables, drive couplers, and seal kits for cylinders made. “We’re working on developing hydraulic valves,” he says. “They were built specifically for these machines and are no longer available from the original manufacturer.”

Martin also credits customers for leads on parts sources, which allows him to help other customers. “My entire business is the result of my customers and having the parts they needed,” he says. “I was in the right place at the right time.”

Martin hopes to have a print catalog published for 2024. In the meantime, Wrangler owners needing parts are encouraged to give him a call.

“If we don’t answer, leave a message with the model and serial number,” says Martin. “We return all calls, and if we don’t have the part, we’ll try to point you to someone who does.”

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Seed Company Adapts Organic Seeds

Zachary Paige’s quest to preserve culturally important crops for people from many cultures in Minnesota and nearby states continues (Vol. 46, No. 3). The focus on preserving and marketing Latino heritage seeds will be made easier with a couple of pieces of equipment purchased with an NCR-SARE grant (North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program).

Three growers, including Paige, are already growing peppers and corn and selectively breeding plants to save seeds with open-sourced genetics.

A 4-row corn planter to grow White Dent Rustler Corn and a food-grade corn sheller will assist in growing and processing corn that can be made into tortillas, masa, and elote.

Drying racks will be useful for Paige’s North Circle Seeds business, which will offer about 85 organic varieties in 2024.

“Most companies are just packing seeds from other growers. What makes our seed company unique is we source our seeds from Minnesota (and a few from Wisconsin), and customers know the seeds are reliable and support local farmers,” Paige says.

“My mission with the seed company is to support the food system of diverse communities living in Minnesota. We should be supplying foods of their culture, so we’re adapting seeds to grow here,” Paige says.

In addition to Latino corn, peppers, and garlic, his varieties include seeds from other cultures. Zebra and Simeon’s white eggplant and collards are African favorites. There’s also Ethiopian kale, Hmong long beans, Ukrainian squash, and Asian greens.

“My strategy is to ask what the most important vegetable variety is for them, and together we’ll tackle and work on adapting and selling that seed in Minnesota, on one



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plant variety at a time,” Paige says. “With all the seeds, it’s about telling the story of the seed and highlighting the growers.”

It’s also important to help growers add value to the crops they grow by turning them into products to sell and/or save seeds to sell to other growers. Paige is working with the University of Minnesota to create short educational videos about saving seeds from vegetables grown in the state. He also offers workshops and presentations covering all aspects of breeding, growing, and saving seeds.

Check out his website for a complete list of open-pollinated seeds along with varieties that have been crossed with hybrids, which produce seeds that can be replanted.

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Photo courtesy of Jeff Tribe

Through VETSon, Yates hopes to use technology to make veterinary services accessible and equitable for all animal owners - regardless of farm size.

They’re Taking Farm Vet Care Online

A father-son duo is tackling the problem of too few rural veterinarians with VETSon, a virtual service platform designed to connect farmers and vets through their smartphones.

Founder Dr. Glen Yates has more than 40 years of veterinary experience. When he sold his practice, Yates Veterinary Hospital, he decided to join forces with his son Colin and focus their energy on helping rural animal owners who were falling through the cracks of traditional veterinary care. A global shortage of veterinarians has become more pressing, thanks to the pandemic, career burnout, and a rapidly retiring workforce. The vets that do work typically only have time for the largest farming operations. This means many small or hobby operations are left without good veterinary care options.

Through VETSON, Yates hopes to use technology to make veterinary services accessible and equitable for all animal owners - regardless of farm size. The app’s name has two meanings, both “vets online” and “vet son,” as a nod to the relationship between the founders.

Dr. Yates has already adopted the award-winning technology in his own practice to support remote farms in Ontario. It’s slowly being adopted by other practices, both equine and large animal, to improve efficiency.

Each vet practice sets its prices, which users can view before booking an appointment. Typically, the cost will be similar to a vet’s in-person hourly rate, but the visit will be shorter because drive time isn’t a factor. “For example, a vet could set their availability

from 2 to 6 p.m.,” says Colin Yates. “Then, farmers can book within that timeslot, pay upfront, and have a real-time video call with them.”

VETSon, in turn, charges a fee per transaction submitted by the veterinary practice. This includes appointments, purchasing medication, and more. All veterinarians who offer telemedical services through VETSon must hold a license in the region where they accept clients and follow drug prescription regulations and professional standards.

These live videos are saved as a medical record that the vet can reference later. They also allow for continuity of care between different vets within the same practice. Says Yates, “VETSON keeps records completely transparent and transferable.” The platform also allows for seamless animal health tracking and creates a channel for communication between animal caretakers and vets. Several point-of-care diagnostic tests are in the works to help farmers who use the app make diagnoses independently.

To date, VETSon has only partnered with vets within Canada but is interested in fostering relationships with U.S.-based vets. “If you’re a veterinarian in the United States interested in our virtual approach, please reach out,” says Yates.

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