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Inspect machinery before rollouts



By WILLIE VOGT



COLUMNISTS often use the calendar as a guide when working on topics to write

about throughout the year. For the Farmer Iron column, I aim to match issues you're dealing with to my topic each month.

This month, often a slower time around a cash-grain operation and even in a livestock operation (except on forage-making days), offers a good chance to review the equipment you have in inventory and determine if anything needs replacing.

If you've been following an equipment-management plan with scheduled "retirement" for machines, July is a good time to ascertain the condition of equipment that might be used in trade come fall when

Key Points

- July is a good time to evaluate equipment needs.
- Farm shows offer simple way to get details on new iron.
- New technology offers enhanced operation efficiency.

interest-waiver programs pop up.

We know from the invitations coming into our office that you'll have plenty of new equipment to look at with the big fall farm shows across the country, including our own Farm Progress Show Aug. 29-31 in Amana, Iowa; and Husker Harvest Days, Sept. 12-14, near Grand Island, Neb.

Keeping up with change

The farm shows — especially the bigger corporate shows where the latest equipment is exhibited for the very first time — remain the No. 1 location for finding out what's new, whether it's a tractor, a combine or a tillage tool.



Technology is moving forward. From one year to the next, what is important can change. For example, we're seeing a tremendous rise in interest in autosteering tools. Their popularity makes sense, as farmers try to get more work out of a day.

An older farmer told me re-

cently that he likes autosteering because even after 12 hours in the tractor, he could get his 68-year-old self out of the seat and still have some energy to enjoy the evening. When I asked him how the technology added to his bottom line, he was quick to say it didn't bring him a profit; yet he said having energy at the end of a long day is some kind of payback.

At the big farm shows, it's possible to see all the makers of different high-tech tools, talk to representatives and get your questions answered. Be sure to pick up a business card or two when at the show in case you think of more questions later; you can use the power of e-mail to get a better response.

Sales flat so far in 2006

The latest equipment report from the Association of Equipment Manufacturers shows

Original inventions unveiled at show

If you make it to the Farm Progress Show this year, check out the Inventor's Challenge area on the site. This is where 10 finalists from a new contest will show off their innovations. Show visitors — that's you — get to vote on what they think is the most ingenious item. There's big prize money on the line, so make the trip to that area of the show and vote for your favorite. Learn more at www.farmprogressshow.com.

that industry inventories of new equipment are sliding lower as makers determine that the buying industry has been drying up. That may mean fewer machines on hand at the dealer; even calling around to other dealers may not net you the latest and greatest machines.

However, flat sales at a time of rising prices and softer demand are good news for the industry as a whole. It means growers recognize the need to keep equipment updated for top efficiency and that the latest machines on the market do offer the productivity you demand.

Plan a trip to a big farm show near your operation this year. It'll be a chance to catch up not only on what the big equipment makers are doing, but also to check in with the shortline equipment makers.

Irrigator observes advantage in autosteering

WE started a new online submission form in May to allow readers to send in ideas and thoughts on topics they want to see in Farmer Iron. Darrell Kleinschmit, Wausa, Neb., sent us a note about his use of autosteering and how it works for his operation. Kleinschmit is using the universal autosteer kit from Deere and the Starfire I free signal, which he says works great for him. He says that during planting, the system was "a lot more accurate than what I could do with a marker."

The universal kit is easy to move from tractor to tractor, which Kleinschmit does in less than 30 minutes; and he's found the system a real help when planting in irrigation pivots.

"If you are in an irrigated field and are using the straight track mode, then you can save some time planting by starting out in the middle of the field close to the pivot," he says. "Make several rounds, so the pivot has someplace to go, and then go back and start on the other side, and your rows will match up where you started them. This way you don't have to wait for the pivot to move when you plant up to it."

Kleinschmit says he's hoping to use the system for spraying this summer, too.

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