



How to buy a tractor

By Sandra Frost

“I have 10 acres in Powell, Wyoming, with lawn, corrals, a barn, pasture, and a gravel driveway. I think I need a tractor to get all the jobs done. How do I buy one? What do I look for?”

You have reached the point a riding lawn mower is no longer big enough and cannot provide enough power for the work that must be done. A tractor can move or lift loads with a front-end loader (a high lift), run equipment with the power takeoff (PTO), carry equipment with a three-point hitch, and transport equipment with a drawbar. A drawbar is a heavy bar attached to the rear of a tractor and used as a hitch for pulling various equipment. A three-point hitch is used to pull a plow or mower.

Begin by deciding what jobs need to be done. You may want to move bedding and manure out of stalls or corrals, blade a driveway, plow snow, mow a pasture, rototill a garden, drill post holes, spray chemicals, or

harrow a pasture. Once the types of jobs are determined, you can choose implements that attach to the tractor to accomplish those jobs. Each implement has its own horsepower requirements. The size and power of the tractor needed becomes a function of the implements you want to attach to it.

Find a local, full-service, reputable equipment dealer when looking for new equipment. Spend time asking questions and looking at different models and brands of tractors.

“Choosing the cheapest tractor may not be a long-term solution

to your workload. Equally important may be access to parts and service through a full-service dealer,” says Ed Sessions, manager of Park County Implement in Powell.

Features of a tractor include: a heavy frame, handling characteristics, engine capacity (horsepower), cooling system, hydraulic system, transmission, drawbar, PTO, tires, and safety equipment. Tractors for small acreages usually are 16 to 45 horsepower with water-cooled engines. Safety equipment includes a rollover protection structure (ROPS), seat belt, lights, signs, and PTO shield.

Inspect used tractors carefully before buying. Ask to see a maintenance log if available. A 1998 study of auctioned equipment found that 97 percent of tractors and more than 85 percent of implements offered for sale had defects, lacking such essential safety equipment such as slow-moving emblems, ROPS, seat belts, lights, PTO master shields, starter solenoid covers, or steering components.



Three-point hitch

Just like a car, a new or used tractor depends upon you for regular maintenance. Set up a regular maintenance schedule, and keep to it. Lubricate fittings and moving parts. Check and fill the oil, hydraulic fluid, and battery water if battery is not sealed. Check tire pressure and all filters.

“Don’t forget to check wheel bolt torque after 10 hours of use and at regular maintenance intervals. Rough terrain will loosen wheel bolts and affect performance,” says Greg Wilson, manager of Heart Mountain Farm Supply in Powell.

Equipment manufacturers have many tractor models particularly designed for jobs on small to mid-size land parcels. If you have made a list of jobs you want the tractor to do and tell the dealer any special conditions that exist, you should be able to find a tractor that will do the job.

Tractor information

Nebraska Tractor Test Laboratory
 35 & East Campus Loop
 P.O. Box 830832
 Lincoln, NE 68583-0832
 Telephone: (402) 472-2442
 Fax: (402) 472-8367
 E-mail: tractortestlab@unl.edu
 Web site: <http://tractortestlab.unl.edu/>

“Equipment Value Official Guide” and “Equipment Value Official Guide Online.” Available in print, CD, or on-line versions

IRON Solutions
 1195 Smizer Mill Road
 Fenton, MO 63026-3480
 Telephone: (636) 343-8000
 Web site: www.ironolutions.com

To find the equipment guides, scroll to the bottom of the main Web page, and click on the appropriate links under “Solutions.”



Tractor Features:

- Frame
- Handling
- Engine
- Hydraulic system
- Drawbar
- Power takeoff
- Tires
- Safety

Implements:

- Manure spreaders
- Mowers
- Rototiller
- Front-end loader, or bucket
- Chain harrow
- Utility cart
- Scraper blade
- Gravel leveler
- Posthole digger
- Hay-making equipment



10 Tractor Safety Tips:

- Know your tractor and implements
- Use ROPS and seat belt every time
- Be familiar with the terrain
- Never start an engine in a closed building
- Always keep the PTO shielded
- Keep hitches low and on the drawbar
- Never get off the tractor and leave the engine running
- Never refuel while the engine is running or hot
- Keep children off of and away from the tractor and implements
- Take time to work safely

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