

Energy Edicts

By James W. Garthe

Penn State Ext. ag engineer

Today's farm tractors have come a long way from the old steam powered traction machines of yesterday, says James W. Garthe, Penn State Extension agricultural engineer.

The ancestors' of today's tractor were huge and awkward to operate. Some required eight men just to run them and sparks from the machine's smokestacks often caused fires.

Modern agricultural tractors are powerful, efficient and highly specialized. Hitching systems and power take-off drives have been standardized and operator comfort has become a major feature.

Tractors come in two main types: two and four wheel drives. But there are several kinds of two wheel drive tractors and a couple of different four wheel drives.

The different kinds of two wheel drive tractors fall into one of two categories: standard tread and row-crop, or adjustable tread. Standard tread is popular in wheat-growing areas and orchards where tread width makes no real difference.

Among row-crop tractors, there are also two types: tricycle and wide front end. The tricycle was popular in older models, but provides less operator comfort and

is less stable. Adjustable front ends offer better stability and comfort and a variety of tread widths to work in row crops. The high-clearance tractor is a variation of the row-crop type that provides 12 to 14 extra inches of clearance under the tractors for working tall crops such as sweet sorghum.

Four wheel drive tractors come in true four wheel drives and front-wheel auxiliary. Front-wheel auxiliary drives are actually conventional two wheel drive tractors that have been modified to

power the front wheels when needed. These tractors have front wheels that are larger than conventional front wheels but smaller than the rear wheels.

True four wheel drive tractors

have wheels that are all the same size and all of them are used to propel the tractor.

There is a tractor for every agricultural need and each type has its own special features.

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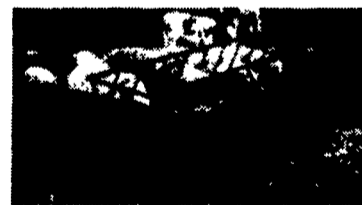
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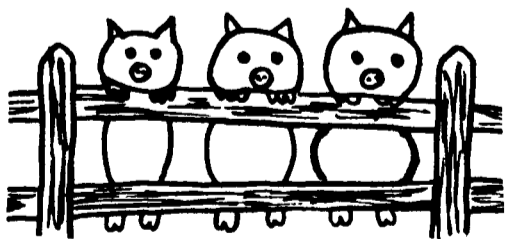


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