

# Basically Farming

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looking for.

Tractors built since the mid '50's could be a good all-purpose utility tractor. Older tractors can still perform a lot of hard work — however that would likely be limited to pulling something hooked to the drawbar and using the power takeoff (PTO) to power a piece of equipment such as a mower. Newer tractors have more advanced systems, so consider the type of work you plan to do and the attachments that you would like to use and then look for a tractor that will meet those needs.

Things to look for include live PTO, live hydraulics, a standard three-point hitch, one or more hydraulic outlets, and power steering if you plan to use a tractor with a front-end loader. "Live PTO and hydraulics" means the power takeoff shaft or the hy-

draulics are not affected by the transmission clutch. That means you can start and stop the PTO or raise and lower the hydraulics regardless if the clutch is in or not. A standard three-point hitch lets you hook up to a huge variety of attachments regardless of the manufacturer. Hydraulics allows you to raise and lower implements by attaching hoses from the hydraulic cylinder mounted on the implement to the tractor.

Rollover protection system (ROPS) protects the operator in a rollover when used with a seat-belt. ROPS first became available in the '60s and became standard in 1985. Dealers have kits available from the manufacturer that install on most models from the '60s to 1985.

Once you select a model to look at, it becomes an exercise in mechanics — the cosmetics should probably be placed lower

on the list. It has to start easy, run well when hot, charge the electrical system, brake well, steer well, and get good traction.

This is a partial checklist for a simplistic preview of a working tractor:

- Does it start easily on a cold engine? This may eliminate several items in one shot.
- Does it run well when hot? Plan on spending a half-hour running it. After running, look for leaks, both oil and antifreeze. Lastly, after it is warm, shut it down and see how it starts.
- Do the brakes work well? The brakes themselves are inexpensive to replace — it is the expensive tear-down to get the new ones in which is expensive. You can test the brakes by locking one wheel and turning to that side. The tractor should spin and the wheel should not rotate.
- Does it smoke? Blue smoke indicates the engine burning oil. White or black smoke can frequently be corrected with carburetor or ignition changes, but still

represents work.

• Does it make clunking noises from inside the engine? Simple ticking from the top of the engine may be a simple valve adjustment, but a deep thump from the bottom or middle of the engine would indicate very serious and expensive repairs. The clunk should be more pronounced under load. This may be an indication of problems with the crankshaft, bearings, or piston rods.

• How does the oil look? After you have run it for a while, stop the engine and check the oil for foaming or presence of water. This is a showstopper.

• Is there head seepage? Look for fluids seeping out the head gasket. If the tractor is encrusted with grease and dirt, it may cover up obvious signs of seepage.

• Is the clutch good? The clutch is not that expensive, but splitting the tractor in half is beyond what most folks want to do.

• Check the charging system. There should be a slight charge shown on the meter when the engine is running and a change in the charging level when the lights are turned on. At running speed, no discharge should be shown.

for a period of time to be sure that there is no leakdown. Chattering noises from the pump while lifting indicate the pump is getting insufficient flow of hydraulic fluid. The pump will have experienced excessive wear when run this way for long periods of time and may be ready to fail.

• Look for structural cracks. It takes a bit of time, but it is well spent. Go over the cast and steel components and look for hairline cracks. Again this is not expensive to correct, but extremely time consuming. It would be unwise to work a tractor until such problems are corrected.

Buying a used tractor is always a somewhat hazardous undertaking, and older tractors will tend to be less reliable than newer models. However, by observing the following recommendations, these hazards can be held to a minimum.

Buy from a reputable source. Find out all you can about its service, performance, and repair history. Don't overrate a new coat of paint. Try and see what it is covering. Look at more than one tractor and contact more than one source.

Plan ahead so you have time to shop around. Try to arrange to use the tractor for a few days on a trial basis, with the option of buying it if you are satisfied with its performance. Whatever you buy, insist on receiving a copy of the owner's manual with the tractor. Then be sure and read it! Get any promised warranty or guarantee in writing.

Know your needs, pocketbook, and what's on the market. Be as knowledgeable on the tractor as you can through research and conversation and be sure to check it out to the best of your ability. Have fun, but use common sense when shopping for your tractor.

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