Buying tips for used equipment

Tight economic times cause farmers to cut back on new tractor and machinery purchases, and either fix up the old iron or hunt for good-quality used equipment. Following are ten buying tips and cautions when shopping for used farm equipment.

1. **Paint**
   - Watch for overspray and painted-over decals that indicate haste in painting or intent to cover up a problem.

2. **New parts**
   - Ask to see maintenance records. You want to know what caused a part to fail and require its replacement.

3. **Product Identification Number (PIN)**
   - Tampering with the PIN is illegal. Ask for evidence of ownership.

4. **Cleaned or washed machine**
   - This may be the mark of past good maintenance, or an intent to “wash away” potential problems. Look out for fresh oil seeps and “new-looking” paint that was, until recently, protected by years of built-up grease.

5. **Ill-fitted parts**
   - Hammer marks, kinked hoses and parts misalignment indicate wrong parts were used or care during assembly was ignored.

6. **Oil tricks**
   - On engines, thicker oils are sometimes used to reduce leakage. Check the owners manual for the proper oil grade. If possible, get an oil analysis, especially if the oil has a “tackiness” to it.

7. **“Just overhauled”**
   - Look for new gasket edges and shiny metal where parts join to be sure. Ask to see shop receipts for the work.

8. **Dealers and Salespersons**
   - Are dealer repairs carefully done during slack winter months or in haste during times of fieldwork? Are salespersons genuinely helpful, or do you seem pressured to buy?

9. **Contractors’ equipment**
   - Contractors sometimes buy less-expensive agricultural equipment for their more-demanding industrial uses. Watch out for points of excess wear and oversize or heavy-duty tires not typical of the equipment.

10. **Run and drive it**
    - Go with the seller to the lot to get the machine. Observe any start-up problems, smoke puffs or unusual sounds. If possible, load tractors in all gears once warmed up to check for desired lugging power.