

Routine tractor maintenance

Source: Tim Stombaugh, extension agricultural engineer

Don't let the maintenance of your tractor go by the wayside when you get busy. There's a tendency to put maintenance on the back burner as spring and summer field activities get into full swing. Often when we do think about maintenance, it is the implement we think about, and we ignore the tractor.

A simple front-to-back routine every week can help you remember key maintenance points. The manufacturer will have suggested-intervals for most of the maintenance tasks, so you won't have to do everything every week. But the routine will prompt you to ask if it is time to do specific tasks.

Start with the front axles and steering. Is it time to grease those bearings and steering components? Make sure nothing is loose. Next, check the coolant system. Make sure the coolant levels are adequate. Make sure the radiator is not plugged up with debris.

Now, take a look at the belts. Make sure they have the right tension and that they are not cracked. This will prompt you to have a spare on hand. Look at the air cleaner. Make sure it's not plugged up and robbing power from your engine by not allowing air to get through.

Take a look at the engine oil. You should check this daily, but if you haven't, a good time to do it is during your weekly inspection. Also check the fluid itself. Make sure it doesn't have any contaminants or water in it.

If your battery is not a maintenance-free battery, check to make sure the liquid levels are adequate. Check the cables for corrosion and make sure they aren't rubbing against the frame components.

Move on to the clutch and brake linkages. When you use a tractor every day, you may not notice the linkage getting out of adjustment. Make a specific effort to check for free play and other adjustments on that linkage.

Look at your hydraulic reservoir. Make sure the fluid is at the correct level and be sure to change the fluid when needed. Not only does the system provide fluids for remote cylinders, but it is the critical lubricating force in your tractor's transmission.

Look at tires to make sure they have the proper inflation. Make sure the back of the tractor is clean, especially where the hydraulic hoses are connected, so you don't get dirt in the system.

These simple procedures can extend the life of your tractors thereby protecting your critical investment. For more information on equipment maintenance, contact the ~~(YOUR COUNTY)~~Powell Cooperative Extension Service.

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