



## All-terrain Farming

### **ATVs offer benefits to farmers; ongoing farm tasks are no match for an ATVs versatility**

By Jim Ruen

When I moved my family to the country, I expected a tractor would be a near-term investment.

With our 3-plus-acre wooded home site and a nearby 120 acres of woods, pasture and cropland, a small tractor seemed a necessity. However, I soon realized my needs as a hobby farmer were considerably different from that of the mixed livestock and crop farm where I had grown up.

I needed something that was dependable and low maintenance yet didn't require a second mortgage on the house.

Photo by Jim Ruen Jim Ruen took his ATV on a tour of the farm and field; see how it did.

Working Around the Farm  
How did the ATVs hold up?

Working in the Field  
Can you seed with an ATV?

Got Weeds?  
Find out if an ATV can help battle weeds

#### ATV Debate

Is it an ATV a toy or a tool? I also didn't need a lot of power, as the fields and pastures were rented to a nephew.

I would be doing tree farming and light maintenance.

What I did want was something that could maneuver well among dense woods and easily pull, push and lift up to several hundred pounds.

With the two properties separated by about 5 miles, I also needed something easy to transport, and in my southeastern corner of Minnesota, also known as "bluff country," it needed to be able to handle rough, steep terrain.

An all-terrain vehicle (ATV) seemed to be the best answer. For half the cost of a new subcompact tractor, I could get similar horsepower, more maneuverability and much higher speeds.

In my work as a writer covering agriculture, I knew that most of what I wanted to do with my land could be done with a powerful four-wheeler if it had the right features.

After spending hours on the Internet exploring tools and options, I found the final link in my chain of decisions: Concord Equipment offers the Groundhog, a hydraulic loader for ATVs.

Most ATV loaders rely on a winch for limited vertical lift, but the Groundhog is powered by a hydraulic pump for up to 4 feet of vertical lift and a 300-pound lift capacity. Attachments include a bucket, a blade and a posthole auger. The three hydraulic cylinders give it down pressure, vital for digging, and deliver tilt control of the attachments. This was what I needed to do my farm work.

The next decision: What make and model of ATV to buy.

I spent hours scouring user remarks on the Internet before I ever walked into a showroom. While there are many excellent ATVs on the market, I quickly narrowed my choices to the Yamaha Grizzly and the Honda Foreman.



Both had the power I needed and were rated well by users. In the end, I went with the 499cc Honda Foreman, due in large part to Honda's reputation for dependability and on-farm use. It offers maximum-performance or maximum-torque continuously variable transmission (CVT) settings, each with high and low ranges, and electric shift program (ESP).

CVT transmissions offer the best of hydrostatic and mechanical transmissions, finding the best gear ratio for each situation. The ESP, with its push-button shifting through four speeds, is sort of an automatic on steroids, giving you the feel and control of a gearshift without the hassle of clutching.

<Next: ATVs Around the Farm>

About the Author: Jim Ruen is a freelance writer and tree-farmer in-training in southeastern Minnesota. He lives and gardens on a 3.3-acre wooded lot and works another 120 acres of woods, fields and streams a few miles away.

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This article first appeared in the March/April 2009 Hobby Farms. If you enjoyed this article and want more like it, [click here to subscribe online.](#)