

Tractor lab tests manufacturer claims

By Dave Madsen

Besides Big Red football, UNL has something that no other U.S. college or university has—a tractor testing program.

According to Milo Mumgaard, assistant professor in the department of agricultural engineering, the testing program at East Campus is the only such program in the U.S.

It is designed to validate claims by tractor manufacturers as to the performance of their tractors, Mumgaard said. He said that all tractors sold in the state must be approved by it.

He said the UNL testing facility began operation in 1919, as one of the first consumer testing programs in the world. He said it was started because farmers had no way of testing tractor manufacturers' claims.

Some of the items tested are horsepower, fuel consumption, drawbar performance and noise level of the tractor during use.

"Our testing program has a very good reputation," he said. "Until World War II, we had the only testing center in the world. Since then other countries have developed testing programs, but they're all based on Nebraska's (program)."

Mumgaard said the four full-time staff

members with the program have tested foreign tractors as well as U.S. models.

He said it takes about one week to run a tractor through the various tests. Probably 40 tractors will be tested this year, Mumgaard said, but he said this is a very large year. He said that last year about 30 tractors were tested.

Four years ago, about one out of every four tractors tested didn't pass," Mumgaard said. He said he wasn't sure about figures for more recent years.

He said that most of the tractors that fail the tests do so because they don't meet the manufacturers' horsepower claims.

"One company claimed about 15 horsepower more than the tractor could deliver," he said. "They were forced to change their claim in that area."

The tractor testing program is self-supporting, according to Mumgaard. Each company that wishes to have a tractor tested must pay a base fee, plus an additional charge in accordance with the horsepower of the tractor.

He said that last year the average charge for each tractor was \$3,000, but it would be less this year because smaller tractors are being tested.

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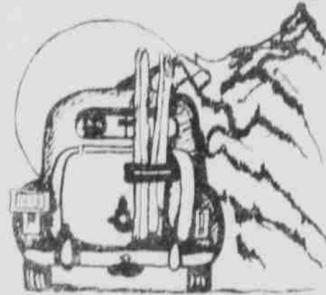
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