

How to maintain ag equipment tires

By **BRENNIA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

Maintaining the proper inflation pressure is the most important thing you can do to maximize tire performance. Doing that can more than double the life of an agricultural

tire that can cost thousands of dollars to replace.

Too much air decreases the flexing of the casing and results in a smaller footprint, increased compaction and a rougher ride. Too little air stresses the tire casing and leads to rapid wear. Either extreme hurts performance and can ruin a tire, the experts say.

“With all the different types of farms and agriculture, types of tires and air pressure recommendations depend on the type of equipment and its individual challenges,” said Joe LeBlanc, manager of Les Schwab Tire Co. in Albany, Ore. “In harvest season a farmer may go from swathing to combining to harvest into plowing, disking and sometimes planting and many pieces of farm equipment serve



Courtesy Les Schwab Tire Center

A Les Schwab ag tire expert provides on-the-farm service to help reduce customers' downtime. A thorough post-harvest checkup is

more than one purpose.”

After the dust has settled, it's time for a thorough inspection of a farm vehicle's tires and suspension.

“We just want to make sure the tires are prepped for winter,” LeBlanc said. “Is there any checking on the tire? With older tires the rubber gets brittle. How's the tread wear? Is the ballast where it should be? We look for lug issues and maintaining the all-important tire

pressure level which, even on the same tires, varies with the things it is used for.”

That includes road travel, an extremely demanding chore for most farm machines. Adding a little more pressure may be called for to help prevent irregular wear.

Many farmers have learned to make their own such calculations, be it with tire charts and load tables or the use of online tools that help determine the ideal pressure based on tractor weight, what's being pulled and the speed traveled.

“A lot of farmers are really well educated on this and anymore there are programs, such as through the ag show,” LeBlanc said. “Some farmers will check it every day and everything has got to be exactly right.”

Taking care of travelers keeps water coming

By **BRENNIA WIEGAND**
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Travelers are an irrigation tool known for their flexibility and precision. They are also long-lived machines as long as they are properly cared for throughout the year.

Irrigation service technician Chris Ohler at Ernst Irrigation in St. Paul, Ore., works primarily with such systems.

“Ninety percent of my repairs happen on travelers,” Ohler said. “They're basically giant winches that bring in the hose and the gun that waters the field from up to a quarter mile away.”

Travelers can be used on any crop and may be pointed into a corner of a field where no pivots or linears can go. They are frequently used at dairies to empty lagoons and



Courtesy Ernst Irrigation

Service technician Chris Ohler of Ernst Irrigation in St. Paul, Ore., says travelers are giant winches. The machines are capable of bringing in up to a quarter-mile of irrigation hose.

distribute manure over fields.

“I've got farmers that have 15 machines and farmers that have one,” Ohler said, “and they all rely on that machine to apply water. We want it turnkey when early spring

hits and not be out there doing drastic repairs at the last minute.

“It's like a car; you get in and the check engine light comes on and you keep driving it and you notice that it's

steering funny and then all of a sudden it doesn't stop as good as it used to,” Ohler said. “Everything has to work together right down to the nozzle and sprinkler at the end of the hose.”

Ernst Irrigation provides complete weatherization service in late fall and winter with periodic incentives.

“We grease the ring and pinion gears, oil the chains, change the engine oil and flush the radiator fluid,” Ohler said. “We drain the water out of the booster pump; if you leave water in there it's going to crack. ... And you want to blow all the water out of the hose, too, because it can rupture if it freezes.”

Throughout the year it's important to pay attention to your machine, including

keeping an eye on the oil, radiator fluid and the purity of its gasoline. Keep the filters clean and the chains tight.

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