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ATVs need TLC as they take on more jobs

By **BRENNA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

Since their introduction in the 1970s, all-terrain vehicles have become a valuable tool in agriculture.

"Like most pieces of ag machinery, when something happens — say the animals get out — you need it up and going," Ed Stritzke, manager at Linn-Benton Tractor Co. in Silverton, Ore.

"Probably the most important thing is working with a dealer or repair shop that is in tune with an ATV's agricultural functions," he said. "A motorcycle shop in downtown Portland is not going to understand that it is a tool and a real workhorse."

Once harvest is done and the fields are disked and replanted, ATVs should be winterized alongside other vehicles. Unlike most other

farm vehicles, ATVs tend to be used throughout the year, which makes them easier to leave out of the end-of-season lineup for winter services.

"This is when I want to get that machine checked out," Stritzke said. "We want to get it serviced: Dump that old oil that has accumulated acid and other impurities and get it away from the connecting rod and bearings."

Any farm machine's fate also depends on its care in the thick of the season when tires, filters and fluids need constant monitoring.

Once the dust settles, service includes preparing it for the challenge of doing nothing the rest of the year.

"It's actually harder on equipment to sit idle than to be used," Stritzke said. "It's sort of like people. If you sit on the couch a lot you start to go downhill."

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