



Jeremy Siegrist of Ag West Supply makes a road call at Rickreall Dairy in Rickreall, Ore. As with other operations, the dairy uses many types of equipment, each with tires specific to their use.

Courtesy Photo

Ag tires also need care and maintenance

By **BRENNIA WIEGAND**
For the Capital Press

While doing preventive maintenance it's easy to put off replacing tires — especially when a combine tire can run \$3,000 to \$4,000.

What's not so easy is fixing the old tire on a tractor that's stuck out in the field.

Mike McLain, Ag West Tire Department manager in Rickreall, Ore., said technicians carry 3,000 to 4,000 gallons of non-toxic liquid in tanks with them for adding weight to tractor tires when they make a field call. Putting 150 gallons of ballast in one large tire gives better traction by adding about 1,500 pounds to its total weight.

"Now have fun going out and fixing a flat on an inside dually," McLain said. "You've got to pump the liquid out; we may use a boom or forklift to unbolt and lift out the inside tire, which is 6 feet tall and weighs about a ton. Then empty the liquid from the inside tire and take it off the rim while it's on the tractor and find out your repair. That's a \$500 flat repair."

Of course, it's not always about the tire itself.

"One of the biggest issues farmers have with tires is the drivers; you can be trained in a two-hour class and get a farm endorsement at the age

of 13 and get in a \$250,000 combine and run in somebody's field," McLain said. "Naturally, they have driving skills, but when they're going to make a corner they might hit a fencepost or a piece of equipment and then they've ruined the tire."

A lot of farmers are also investing in caterpillar-like tracks for their tractors, though they are more expensive up front and to maintain.

Not to worry, said Kim Oberg, manager of D&S Tires in Parma, Idaho. His company recaps both tracks and tractor tires.

"We can save their tires," Oberg said. "As long as we have a good core we can rebuild them."

Tires from all over the country and Canada roll into their plants in Idaho, Nebraska and Indiana.

Retreading tracks is about half the cost of buying new ones and doubles the life of a track core.

"You don't have to throw that core away; we're recycling your track core and that's the biggest thing; we're not throwing all that rubber in the dump," Oberg said. "It's quite a process to see; we buff off all the old lugs, put on a new layer of

rubber, extrude our lugs, put each one on and then we vulcanize it with high heat and pressure for about 4½ hours so that the rubber sticks."

In addition to retreading many types of ag tires and tracks, D&S makes irrigation pivot tires from old truck casings. These are

shipped into the plant from all over the country and then buffed, recapped and placed in a hot cap mold to form the tire.

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