

## Make tractor maintenance routine

Source: Tim Stombaugh, extension agricultural engineer

Don't let the maintenance of your tractor slip when you get busy. There's a tendency to put maintenance on the back burner as spring and summer field activities get into full swing. Often when we do think about maintenance, it is the implement we think about, and we ignore the tractor.

A simple front to back routine executed every week can help you remember key maintenance points. Move from the front to the back of the tractor identifying key things to check. The manufacturer will have suggested intervals for most of the maintenance tasks, so you won't have to do everything every week. But the routine will prompt you to ask if it is time to do specific tasks.

Start with the front axles and steering. Is it time to grease those bearings and steering components? Make sure nothing is loose or ready to fall off. Then move to the coolant system. Make sure the coolant levels are OK, and the fluid is all right. Make sure the radiator is not plugged up with debris.

Next, take a look at the belts. Make sure they have the right tension, aren't cracked and ready to fail. This will prompt you to have a spare on hand. Then look at the air cleaner. Make sure its not plugged up and robbing power from your engine, because it can't get the air through it.

Take a look at the engine oil. This should be checked daily, but if you haven't, a good time to do it is during your weekly inspection. Also check the fluid itself. Make sure it doesn't have any contaminants or water in it.

If you battery is not a maintenance free battery, are the liquid levels all right? Check the cables for corrosion and make sure they aren't rubbing against the frame components.

Move on to the clutch and brake linkages. Here's a point where you can stop and take a specific look at these linkages. When you use a tractor everyday, you may not notice the linkage getting out of adjustment. Make a specific effort to check for free play and other adjustments on that linkage.

Look at your hydraulic fluid. Make sure it's at the right level and be sure to change the fluid when needed. Not only does it provide fluids for remote cylinders, but it is the lubricating force in your tractor's transmission and it is very critical.

Look at tires to make sure they have the proper inflation. Make sure the back of your tractor is clean especially where the hydraulic hoses are connected, so you don't get dirt in the system.

These simple procedures can extend the life of your tractors thereby protecting your critical investment. For more information on equipment maintenance, contact the (YOUR COUNTY) Cooperative Extension Service.

Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, sex, religion, disability or national origin.