

BUYING A USED SPRAYER:

Ten Questions to Ask Before the Purchase



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What you need to know

Everything about it looks good — appearance, features, performance history, even the price. But there's more to a used self-propelled sprayer than what meets the eye. How old is the machine? Does it compare favorably to other used sprayers on the market? Can you work on the machine yourself? And what about the seller? Do they appear open and honest or less-than-forthright?

The answer to these questions (and others) will help you determine whether the tens of thousands of dollars you'll lay out for a used sprayer is a great investment or a great big mistake. It's important to consider the answers to these questions in the context of the machine's return on investment (ROI) and how it will contribute to the profitability of your operation.

TOP 10 QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. What is the asking price, and is it comparable to sprayers of similar model year, hours operated and features?

Buying a used sprayer is a lot like buying a used car. You'll need to do some research to decide if the asking price is fair for the machine's age, its wear and tear, and equipment. There is no sprayer version of the automotive Kelly Blue Book, but there are Internet resources that can help you assign value. At \$14.95 for a single appraisal or \$200 for a set of 25 you can access the data of most used sprayer models. Keep in mind that good pre-owned sprayers usually command \$50,000 to \$150,000, so any machine priced outside that range should raise red flags.

2. Why is the owner selling the sprayer?

This can be a difficult question to answer. However, in most cases, sprayer owners are selling their used units in order to buy new. They are motivated both by new technology and tax advantages of owning newer equipment. Often, the used machines they're selling have been well maintained and are in good condition. Unlike used cars, you're usually not buying someone else's problem.

3. Is the seller trustworthy, and will they stand behind all condition claims?

Find out what kind of guarantees, if any, the seller is offering with the sale. Will they be available to answer questions you might have after the purchase is completed and address problems the sprayer has within a certain time frame after the sale, or are they selling the machine as-is? If they tell you the sprayer is "field ready," it should mean the machine has been inspected and serviced with any repairs made and can be used immediately. You might talk with people who work with or have a business relationship with the seller. They could tell you about the seller's character and ethics.

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4. Was the sprayer used on a private farm or for custom application work?

People tend to take care of what they own more than what they rent or use for a short time. In the application world, sprayers owned by growers who use the machines only on their acreage generally are better maintained than sprayers belonging to custom applicators. The reason: custom applicators often have many farmer clients to serve, so they go through sprayers faster. The opposite likely is true of sprayers owned by growers and used only on their fields.

5. What standard and optional equipment is on the machine, such as booms, precision tools, hydrostatic wheel motors and tires?

Depending on how the sprayer is outfitted, its value could be higher or lower. When it comes to standard equipment you'll want to make note of the size and condition of such things as the engine, booms, tires and precision tools and what it will take to replace those parts in the future. Is the sprayer hydrostatic? If yes, check the wheel motors and inquire if any have been replaced. A new wheel motor can cost \$10,000 or more, and once one goes out others usually do, too. Will any optional equipment on the machine make you more productive? For example, Apache Sprayers have an optional adjustable axle for varying crop row widths.

6. Has the sprayer been properly maintained and are there records to back it up?

Any used motorized vehicle you purchase should come with maintenance records. That is especially important for pre-owned sprayers. Maintenance records should include fluids and filters, when the sprayer was greased and any inspections, service and repairs. A complete maintenance schedule should appear in the sprayer's owner manual. Any maintenance or inspections conducted by a dealer should be available for you to view.

7. What repairs will you need to make before using the machine in the field?

In this area, pay special attention to the booms and the sprayer's wet system, since they experience the most wear and tear. To find out if the engine has a problem, check the oil for discoloration and a burnt smell. Oil samples can be tested by companies that offer chemical analysis. If there are debris or traces of water in the engine it could point to problems with pistons, bearings and other internal parts. You might ask a someone who already works on your machinery to inspect the sprayer for added peace of mind.

8. What are the sprayer's estimated annual maintenance costs, and will you be able to do the work yourself?

The seller should have information they can share with you on what it costs per year to keep the machine running. If not, be wary of proceeding with the purchase. You also can get an idea of maintenance costs from sprayer manufacturer websites. Most farmers work on their machinery themselves. Be aware that a hydrostatic sprayer has a complex collection of hoses and hydraulic parts that you won't find in mechanical drive sprayers like the Apache.

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9. Is the machine still under warranty, and is the warranty claim history available for inspection?

Any remaining warranty on a used sprayer is a bonus — even if the warranty expires in a couple of years. You'll want to know the warranty's terms and condition, and what it covers. Does it cover the machine bumper-to-bumper or specific parts? And is the warranty history available for review? Many dealer databases contain information on warranty-covered service, because repairs made under warranty are always performed by dealer technicians.

10. Where is the nearest dealer who sells and services that sprayer brand?

You could run into a repair or maintenance issue you cannot handle yourself, so it's always good to know the closest dealer that provides those services. Many dealers charge a minimum for service calls, often in the \$250-\$500 range. If you're a master mechanic and do all of your own sprayer repairs, you might not need a dealership within reasonable driving distance. Most parts orders can be delivered overnight through UPS, FedEx or another company.

Summary

Buying a used sprayer requires doing as much homework as purchasing a new machine. When meeting with the seller you'll want to ask questions about such things as the sprayer's price, age, hours of operation, how it was used, standard and optional equipment, maintenance and repairs, annual cost of operation, warranties and proximity to a dealership that sells and services that brand. You also should consider the seller's trustworthiness and whether they have maintenance records to prove how they've treated the machine. The answers to those questions will factor into the sprayer's value.

Looking to get additional information or have any questions?
Contact whitepapers@etsprayers.com to talk with an
Application Specialist today!

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