

Tyre specialists will typically carry a wide assortment of both new and used tyres, the latter perhaps providing a more economical means of kitting out a little used but still viable item of equipment

What Can A Tyre Specialist Do For You?

You would not ask for seed mixture or top dressing advice from a tyre specialist. So why is it we often ask tyre specialists to supply a tyre as opposed to seeking their recommendations? James de Havilland discusses...

First things first. It is all too easy to assume that a tyre wholesale company or fitting outlet is also a tyre specialist. The reality is that it can take some shopping around to find someone who really understands your needs and can source the right tyres. By the right tyres, incidentally, that means more than just supplying the correct size and tread pattern. Although they all have being round and black in common, tyres can vary hugely in what they can offer.

Buying replacement tyres for an existing item of equipment should be easy enough. A like for like replacement will typically be a sensible choice. This will apply particularly to ride on mowers. Most designs do not really allow for a different size of tyre to be fitted. That is not to say a 'better' alternative brand may not be available, but in most cases the same type and size of tyre to the original will remain the best choice.

It is when looking at other equipment, to include trailed equipment and tractors, that a bit of lateral thinking can help. A good example is an old four tonne capacity trailer used for odd jobs in winter. Fitted with rock hard tyres, the trailer has restricted use. The right wheel and tyre combination, however, could see the same trailer used to ferry materials around the course year round behind a suitable shod tractor.



Modern mowers will typically be supplied with tyres optimised to suit their application, with little room for alternatives. Tyre design and size availability does change, however, so it may be worth checking with a specialist if seeking alternatives, particularly on an older model



You cannot tell which of these tyres will be the best for working on turf simply by looking. Different carcass strengths and construction methods will influence load bearing capacity and inflation pressures. It is better to seek advice than try and become a tyre expert

Buying a new set of wheel rims and tyres for an old trailer may seem a bit extreme, particularly with modern flotation rubber costing as much as it does at present. Weigh up this cost against the cost of investing in a new trailer or alternative such as a utility vehicle however, and the sums can start to make sense. The trick is to see what is on offer.

RADIAL VERSUS CROSS PLY

If a tyre supplier blankly states radial tyres are superior to those with cross ply construction, then you all you need to know is that they are not a specialist. Although radials may well suit modern cars they are not always right for equipment that operates on turf. Indeed the Goodyear Terra Tire, which many would argue set the 'flotation' ball rolling back in the 1970s, was and remained a cross ply until production ceased in 2005. (Goodyear sold its agricultural division in the US to Titan Tire).

Frankly the tyre's construction is not something to be concerned about. What is far more relevant is the tyre's ability to do a specific set of tasks. So instead of asking for a radial tyre to fit a certain make and model of tractor, the better approach is to outline what the tyre will have to do.

SELECTING THE RIGHT TYRE

There are two elements to this. The first is to determine what existing tyre and wheel rim are fitted. If these are not doing what is asked of them, identify what the problem is. In most cases it will be that the tyres footprint and inflation pressures are incompatible with working on certain areas of the course.

At this stage, the solution will seem to be obvious. Fit as large a set of tyres as possible onto the existing rims. As long as the diameter of the tyres matches those of the originals, the axle ratios on 4WD equipment should remain the same. The problem is that this is actually more difficult to achieve than may at first be appreciated.

An alternative approach is to consider what the machine in question is used for. In the case of a tractor, it can pay to retain the original wheels and tyres and take a second approach; purchasing a new set of wheels to go with what may be purpose designed flotation tyres. A good tyre specialist will be able to come up with a broad choice, offering recommendations that could allow a 45hp tractor to have a large enough footprint to safely work on the greens.



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A wide, small diameter rim is the key to fitting the tyres with the lowest ground bearing pressures. A specialist will be able to come up with a wheel and tyre package to suit specific demands



This well-balanced tractor tyre combination is of little value if used to work with trailed kit without similarly well thought through wheel and tyre equipment. Fitting new tyres and rims to an old trailer can considerably enhance its versatility



It is tractors that will benefit most from the attention of a specialist supplier, the small diameter but wide rim fitted to this tractor obviously allows a tyre choice that would not be possible on standard wheel equipment



Tractor manufacturers will offer a choice of standard tyres, with dealers perhaps offering a further set of alternatives. But it is tyre specialists who may come up with the best package. Before selecting a tractor, see what tyres are available to fit. Remember also that front driven axles need tyres compatible with those at the rear

This level of flotation may simply not be achievable with tyres that will fit the original rims supplied with the tractor. Of equal importance, retaining the 'old' wheels and tyres for other duties, such as loader work, will help enhance the life of the flotation tyres. A set of tyres can easily outlive the original tractor if only used on turf and not hard surfaces.

GEARING UP TO SWAP OVER WHEEL SETS

Although one set of wheels and tyres for a given vehicle may well suit a course where there is enough equipment to be reserved for certain duties, being able to swap wheels to suit a specific task is a viable alternative. A decent jack and air tools can make removing and fitting replacements much easier, perhaps 20 minutes with practice.

There is also no reason why certain wheels cannot be swapped between different equipment. A wide set of top dresser tyres could well fit a trailer. The trick is to think how tyres can be mixed and matched.

NO NEED TO STICK TO ONE MAKE OR DESIGN

There is nothing in the rulebook that says it is wrong to mix different brands or patterns of tyre between axles. A tractor can have a set of Galaxy rubber on the back with Titan tyres on the front. As long as the rolling diameters marry up on 4WD axles to prevent torque wind up, there will not be a problem. In some instances, running the 'wrong' tyre combination may be fine if the driven axle up front is not engaged.

FIND A SPECIALIST AND STICK WITH HIM

As mentioned at the outset, there is a difference between a tyre specialist and a tyre supplier. The latter will be able to source and fit tyres you choose. A specialist will be able to offer advice and come up with tyres to meet specific needs. If you know what you want and know what new tyres are coming onto the market, a tyre supplier will be fine. For the rest of us, it is better to ask a specialist to help out.

With thanks to Dick Anderson, R H Claydon Ltd (www.rhc.co.uk) and Les Moreton, Sam Moreton and Son (www.farmerstyre.co.uk).