

ATV's - After the Sale
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"Oil is cheap - parts cost". Having been raised in a family where the male figurehead (father for you people in Palm Beach Co. Fl.) preached that one liner, yours truly grew up with a healthy respect for a grease gun and clean oil.

Having penned a couple of articles on features desirable for trapping ATV's, it's only fitting to follow up with something on how to make it live, protecting your investment and getting the longevity and hassle-free service in a harsh and hostile environment.

Let me make a point up front. Service/care starts from day one on an ATV. "Break in" is stressed in the owners manual (Never mind your buddies telling you to, "Ride it like you stole it.") Follow the advice in the manual.

The most important investment/maintenance move you can make on any ATV is to invest in an after market air filter.

The stock filter (regardless of make/model) is simply not up to the task of providing clean air to your engine under less than ideal conditions. Blackie, I just bought this thing and now you say I should buy a new air filter also? Yup, your air filter can be your engines biggest friend, or its biggest enemy. If a boat engine air filter gets dirty out on a lake, what do you think happens to your ATV filter with the crud you run it through? Don't forget if you tow your machine on dirt roads, you're coating the air intake with a nice layer of dust just waiting to be drawn into the air box upon startup.

After market filters don't cost that much either. K & N and Twin Air are but a couple of the better brands. Having run both in ATV's, I opted for the Twin Air. The K & N is great, but it flows so much more air than a stock filter, some models require re-jetting. No thank you. Too much hassle. Just want cleaner air to the motor.

The Twin Air is two-stage foam. Outer layer coarse, inner layer fine. Tack oil supplied by the same company is what does the cleaning, not the foam. Motor oil won't work properly. Don't even consider it. Dirt gets in your engine through the air induction system. This means your air filter is not doing its job or maybe the owner also isn't doing his job cleaning the air filter.

How often should one clean their air filters? Depends on how much you ride, how dusty it is, mud, water, etc. A stock filter in these conditions, every week minimum (if not more). A good after market filter with an "outerwear" maybe 4-6 weeks. Hey, you want clean air or not?

Oil - this is a neglected area also. Hard core recreational riders usually change oil and filter after every third ride (a ride being all day). Now I can hear the howls of dismay, disbelief (mixed with laughter), but that is how you make an investment live and last. When trapping you don't want to take time to change the oil every whip stitch so you buy a good after market air filter, which keeps your oil cleaner longer, and keeps you trapping. Bear in mind however, most ATV's have very small crankcases and hold very small amounts of oil, like 2 quarts or so. Why torture your oil? Change it, your machine will love it. By the way, at least one manufacturer has seen fit to put a real pool-sized oil reservoir and oil fan on one model ATV of 6.6 quarts. That's not a misprint. Think that would help with cooling?

Providing the conditions are right and how you trap, you should be able to go the greater part of your season without an oil change with a good air filter. It only takes a few minutes to change it, if needed, no big deal. Some models run synthetic oil and that's a super big help on oil longevity if you can keep the air clean to the

motor - a big help indeed.

Some models specify to run a non-friction modified oil (not a car oil or synthetic) due to slippage of wet clutches etc., so follow the manuals advice.

Tires are probably the first after market product the average "ATV head" looks at. Here again, let your general usage dictate your end result. The biggest, baddest, gnarliest, looking mud tread might turn you on, but may not be the tire for you. As a rule, those big lug open mud treads ride and handle very poorly on the hard pack to say nothing of the added unsprung weight disadvantage. The advantage of after market tires should be added ground clearance, traction, and a 6-ply rating for added puncture resistance. It also doesn't hurt a thing to run a tire sealant in your "mudders". I wouldn't be without it.

Well, there you have it, a short to the point "ditty" on service and longevity for your mud machine.

If you are still shopping and maybe you missed past articles for trapline ATVs and you haven't made up your mind, I'll list some desirable features to look for real quick here. Disc brakes, stay away from drums. Besides being grit and grime traps, they hold water. Not good in freezing weather. If 4wd, a switch to run it in 2wd or 4wd (full time 4wd steers and turns like a tank). All utility ATV's come with boot guards. If for some reason it doesn't you will do well to put them on. High front and rear rack carrying capacity, automatic transmission, and liquid cooled engine please. Independent rear suspension with lots and lots of ground clearance thank you, plus some grease fittings. If you run the water the sealed bearings will fail you. True 4wd as opposed to limited slip in the front differential is nice but not a must. Having owned both, there's a world of difference in the rough stuff. All utility ATV's have gotten on the "floorboard" bandwagon now also. These are way past good - they are great.

Some new and exciting things are happening in the ATV world. Especially with the utility models. No longer do you have to buy the "big boy" to get the features you want. Smaller to mid-sized (300-400-500) models now have the features you seek. As little as 3 years ago this was not so. For example, how about the new 4X4 375 Artic Cat. Automatic transmission, independent front and act - independent rear suspension with 4 shocks, a whopping 10 3/4 inches of ground clearance, disc brakes, sealed water tight aluminum transmission case, darn decent rack carrying cap (100 front-200 rear). "Stick stoppers" to protect the CV boots. Engine braking, 2wd or 4wd selector, 25" tires (getting' good ain't it!) Fact is, about the only thing they could do to improve on with this mid-size is make it liquid cooled and put it on a diet. Claimed dry weight is a portly 645 pounds. What makes a buyer look twice at this model ATV is the price. Just about 2 grand less than the full sized (650cc +) models and yet has the same features that count (like suspension for one). By the way, Suzuki builds the motors for Artic Cats in case you wondered. Artic Cat across the board is listed as a heavier than average machine. Maybe they are well built, their little 2wd 250 has a towing capacity of 850 pounds with a rack carrying capacity 100 front, 200 pounds rear. Compare those figures to other brand 250's. Something to think about.

Anyway, this thing is getting long and time is short. Besides I've gotta go change the oil in my Grizz - by the time this hits print it will be dated. That's how fast it's moving. See you on the trail.