

AGRICULTURE TECHNICAL GUIDES SERIES

Guide to End-Of-Season Equipment Storage & Cleaning

09 September, 2019

Goals of Winter Equipment Storage

Prevent corrosion & bearing contamination

Prevent varnish contamination of gasoline fuel systems

Improve appearance of machinery

Best Practices for New Jersey farms

Wash tillage equipment, tractors, and mowers.

Drain sprayers, irrigation, & produce handling equipment.

Remove fuel from the carburetor on gasoline-fueled machinery.

Step 1: Washing

Field equipment may be pressure-washed, which improves its appearance and helps prevent corrosion over winter.

Removing large dirt clods BEFORE getting the machine wet is recommended.

Select an inconspicuous area, if possible, to conduct washing; and be sure to account for potential issues with stormwater management regulations.

Washing Equipment & Technique

Use a 0- or 10-degree nozzle if possible. Nozzles with a wider pattern are usually ineffective against hardened mud and grease.

Do not use hot water if ambient air is below 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Clouds of condensation will obscure the dirt you're trying to remove.

NEVER apply the water jet to electrical items, or to choke cables. Only pressure-wash what you can see from the outside of the machine.

While the engine bay and underbelly of some machines can be pressure-washed if you're careful, we recommend against it. There's no benefit to the machine or its appearance, and about half the time (in our experience), in spring, you'll find a problem with the machine that was created by pressure washing. See subsequent slides for tips on alternative means to clean up engine bays.

Cleaning Engine Bays & Electrical Parts

We advise that any grease left in the engine bay be left in place. There is little ill effect that can result from its presence. If you desire to clean the engine bay to improve appearance, follow these guidelines.

You'll need a garden hose and some type of industrial de-greaser. Auto parts stores carry a product called "foaming engine degreaser" that works well, as does Simple Green ® and Spray Nine ®. In our experience, "food grade" degreasers used in food handling are the most effective type of degreaser, but they're expensive and much more noxious than other types.

Using a hand squirt bottle, spray the area to be cleaned until degreaser runs off. Come back in 1-3 hours and spray the now-softened grease off with a garden hose. Use of a spray nozzle is helpful, but not necessary. After the water dries, compressed air can be used to get hard-to-reach areas.

Step 2: Greasing

Grease every fitting on the machine within 6 hours of washing. This serves two purposes- annual greasing for machines that only get it once a year; and pushing water out of bearings & other metal-to-metal interfaces.

Greasing equipment now also gives you a chance to see defects you may not have before the machinery was clean.

Any type of petroleum- or lithium-based grease will work. If you have a manual, it's helpful to have it handy in the case of mowers that have more grease fittings than you can readily remember the location of.

Step 3: Winterizing

On gasoline-powered machinery, run the fuel out of the carburetor.

This can be accomplished by starting the engine, then turning off the fuel valve, then allowing the engine to run until it's out of fuel. If the engine doesn't have a fuel valve, siphon the fuel into another container, then start the engine to remove fuel from the carburetor (there will still be enough in the lines to start the engine after you siphon the tank).

After parking machinery with a battery, disconnect the negative cable. Batteries that go dead can freeze, which damages them beyond repair. This ensures that won't happen, and that the machine will start in spring.

Drain any water in sprayers, pumps, and handling equipment. A short guide cannot cover this topic in enough detail, so consult the owner's manual or call Solanum at 732.693.8312 for specific recommendations.

TL;DR

- Don't pressure wash the electrical stuff. Use a garden hose and soap.
- Grease everything after washing.
- Drain the gas tank, if applicable.
- Drain out any water. This is complicated on some machines, so call us.

Thanks for reading, and have a happy and safe growing season!

For more information on equipment maintenance, call 732.693.8312 or visit www.solanum-service.com

Compiled 09 September, 2019 by Curtis McKittrick for Solanum, LLC.

ATG-03

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