

Considering a new used vehicle?



BY JEANA BABCOCK

Sadly, Ron is gone. Yes, our beloved rooster — that I wrote about in previous articles — simply caused too much of a ruckus so we found a new home for him.

Don't get your feathers ruffled, he did not become dinner, he became a distant neighbor. A neighboring farm kindly took our beautiful, but obnoxious, loud rooster in — and they actually offered a trade for a young chick. Pearl, our new gray orpington, has a crooked beak but she is a little sweetie. We are all hoping she is a she and not a he like Ron turned out to be!

Speaking of trades, have you ever traded your older model vehicle for a newer used one? Are you currently in the market for a new used vehicle? Recently, a few people have sought out my advice in this area and I thought it would make a great topic for today's article. Perhaps a few of my tips may help you in your search for the right used vehicle.

Certainly the first order of business in buying a used vehicle is to decide what you are looking for and your budget. Does your budget match your expectations of a vehicle? Yes? Well then, it's time to start shopping!

HAVE A SEAT

After you've circled the car and checked the exterior, get behind the wheel. If you are at a dealership, ask if you can take the car for a spin without a salesperson. There's always a little extra pressure when you have a stranger talking to you when you are trying to get a feel for a new set of wheels.

Now that you are behind the wheel, how does it feel? Adjust your seat and mirrors to prepare for a drive. Does the vehicle have enough leg-



room? Headroom? Are the gauges and controls positioned well? How does the interior look? Are their stains, rips or cigarette burns in the upholstery? Does it bother you if there are? If not, it certainly could be a great negotiating point if you decide to purchase the vehicle. Check out the "bells and whistles." Do they all work? If not, what would be the cost to repair them? Again, another possible negotiation point. What about the backseat? Sit in it to get a feel for comfort. Check out the trunk or cargo area. Is it spacious? Will it suit your needs?

TAKE A DRIVE

One of the most important elements in a used car purchase is the test drive. Try to arrange your test drive so that you start the engine when it's completely cold. Some vehicles are harder to start when they are cold. If the one you are testing starts hard, it might be a sign of problems.

Turn off the radio. A test drive is not the time to jam out with your windows down. Of course if it's a sports car it might be fun to jam out for a few minutes, but then get serious — concentrate and "tune in" to the driving experience. How does it accelerate from a stop? What is the visibility like? Check for blind spots. How does the engine sound? Does the transmission shift smoothly? What's the power like when climbing a hill? Does it brake well? How does the suspension feel? Does it ride nice? Does it shake or rattle when you roll? Are there any unusual noises? Take a peek in the glove compartment — not while driving of course. Is the owner's manual intact? Is there a maintenance record included? If so, this could very well be a wealth of information. If it's been well maintained, with the records at your fingertips, the car will be in better shape than if it's never had maintenance performed.

ASK QUESTIONS

If there was no maintenance record found when you were rummaging around, do they have one elsewhere? Do they know anything about the previous owner of the vehicle? Do they have any history of damage or accidents the vehicle may have been in? Do they have a car fax report? If you are buying the used vehicle from a dealership, do you trust them? Do you know other people who have bought from them? Do they appear honest in answering the questions you have? Are there warranties included in the purchase? Is the warranty a manufacturer warranty or extended?

GET A PROFESSIONAL INSPECTION

When you become serious about purchasing a specific vehicle, it's always a good idea to have it inspected by a reputable shop that is not associated with the place you are buying from. A used car inspection will cost you a bit of money, but it can save you a whole lot in the long run. During the inspection the technician will also test drive the vehicle and be in tune to things you may not have heard or felt on your test drive. He will then do a thorough inspection, visually and systematically. His findings will be documented and you will be advised on the overall health of the vehicle. Sometimes this can be disappointing and other times it can be great news. But either way, it will be a relief to know that you are making an educated decision that you will feel confident about.

Sometimes only time will tell if you made the right decision, like us having to wait to know if Pearl is a he or she, but it doesn't have to be this way with a new used vehicle. Have fun, use your intuition, ask questions, get expert advice and enjoy your vehicle for years to come.

Article courtesy of Babcock Auto Care.