

# She Not Only Thinks Your Tractor Is Sexy, She's Getting Her Own

(NAPSA)—As single women continue to buy homes at twice the rate of single men and more couples move to the country, women are playing a larger role in the selection of outdoor equipment.

In fact, says Janet Schaeffer, customer segment planning manager for John Deere Worldwide Commercial and Consumer Equipment, women now influence about 80 percent of all purchases of residential lawn and garden equipment.

Recognizing women's increasingly important role, manufacturers and dealers are changing their approach to sales and marketing.

Women don't use compact tractors and utility vehicles differently than men nor do they request specific features. Both women and men appreciate the larger seats, cup holders and other comforts. Like men, women want equipment that will accomplish the intended task and that will wear up under use.

For their Christmas presents to each other last year, Darlene and Steve Ramsey had their local John Deere dealership deliver a 997 Z-Trak mower, a 4720 tractor and a six-wheeled John Deere Gator™ TH. The couple had just bought 68 acres near Fallston, Maryland. Although they leased 50 acres to a corn and soybean farmer, that left them with 18 acres to care for themselves.

"When I was out and knew the grass was ready to be mowed, I used to race home to beat my husband so I could mow it," laughs Darlene Ramsey. "Both of us really enjoy taking care of our property and being outdoors."

Ramsey says she appreciated how instructive the dealer personnel were when she bought the equipment.

Being respectful and friendly to women is a logical but important step. So is adding women to the sales staff. Women are also



**More women are buying outdoor equipment and dealers are taking note, changing their approach to sales and marketing.**

impressed by clean bathrooms, clean showrooms and beautified display lots. One dealer planted flowers.

Considering appearance has gone beyond the physical locale. In an age when consumers enjoy wearing apparel bearing the brands they love, it was a logical step to offer John Deere shirts and hats in colors other than the company's trademark green. One dealer who said he never thought he'd be able to sell a pink hat can't keep them in stock.

In Texas, one dealer with four stores went further than pink hats. Tim Prater, general manager of Coufal-Prater Equipment, recently doubled the size of his Coufal-Prater Country Store John Deere dealership in Navasota and added a Purina Mills dealership. Now customers turn up for animal feed, gifts and clothing, as well as for utility vehicles, tractors and parts.

"It's not for every location, but we thought it really made sense here," says Hope Bay Moriarty, animal health division manager for the store.

The 9,300-square-foot store now offers Wrangler® clothing, Western boots, birdhouses, pet grooming products, lawn and garden supplies and livestock feed.

Just as dealers are changing to appeal to a broader customer base, so too are manufacturers reflecting that diversity in brochures and marketing.

John Deere, for example, is showing more women on equipment in its ads and printed material, and using those pictures in general marketing and not just in marketing tailored to women.

Research has shown that if you extend your hand to the woman first, that instantly builds a relationship with her and doesn't offend the man—and relationships are what selling is based on.

Relationships were certainly on the mind of country star Kenny Chesney when he sang the 1999 hit single "She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy." Turns out he was only half right. As manufacturers can attest, women are also finding tractors and other outdoor equipment useful and productive.