FARM WELLY

BOO T TEST

Which is the best?

A welly is a simple thing, but picking a good one will decide whether your feet spend the winter comfy and warm or riddled with chilblains.

Oliver Mark and James Andrews perseve seven affordable, off-the-shelf options.

No Bull safety boot

QUALITY A peculiar boot that looks to have come from a novelty Father Christmas item. They are constructed from a foamy material that makes them comfortable and light but unfortunately also very poor fitting.

GRIP The foamy sole is made of the same material as the rest of the boot. It’s semi-flexible but provides better grip than expected given the depth of the tread pattern. There is also a leg strap on the back to help pull the boots off.

FIT/BLISTERS Loose fit and inflexible leg does the No Bull fit score no favours and means they can be a pain to wear, especially as they crease in weird places and dig into the shin. The inner shafts around the ankle are very hard and the top part of the shaft is very uncomfortable. A garter around the calf allows wearers blessed with stick-thin pins to tighten things up around the leg.

WARMTH Heaps of neoprene provides polar-bear-like insulation and boots most work boots when it comes to out-and-out warmth. No chilblains or footrubs here.

VALUE A bargain compared with the £7.50 Le Chameaux and far more comfortable and warm than pretty much everything else on test. Definitely worth a punt.

PRICE £45.00

Caldene Westgill

QUALITY The dark horse of our line-up is neoprene-lined but not built for all-out farm work. They have a quality feel, but the natural rubber is unlikely to stand up to solvent abuse quite like some of the others and they are angled towards leisure rather than work. The lining started to peel from the top of the boot and reports from the shops suggest a fair few get returned due to splitting.

GRIP Recent tread depth and a pretty pliable sole provides good purchase on slippery surfaces, though it’s not quite as soft as our first choice – the Bekina.

FIT/BLISTERS The Caldene is a more sensibly priced alternative to the Le Chameaux boot and plenty of padding under foot makes them just as comfortable. A garter around the calf allows wearers blessed with stick-thin pins to tighten things up around the leg.

WARMTH Heaps of neoprene provide polar-bear-like insulation and boots most work boots when it comes to out-and-out warmth. No chilblains or footrubs here.

VALUE A bargain compared with the £10.70 Le Chameaux and far more comfortable and warm than pretty much everything else on test. Definitely worth a punt.

PRICE £55.99

Hunter Argyll

QUALITY An old-school rubber boot boot with a flexible body and tidy finish. They come from Hunter’s work range and have more of a hand-made feel than the rest.

GRIP Traction is the biggest let-down and the sole is so solid and slippery you may as well be sliding around on the cow shed in bow tin shoes. The shallow tread and a shortage of surface area in contact with terra firma means these do not improve with age, and the sole wears down pretty quickly on abrasive surfaces, too.

FIT/BLISTERS The straight cut from the top of the calf to the heel means the foot tends to slides up and down while walking and will work your socks back into the boot toe. It’s not all bad news – the slippery internal material avoided blisters and the rubber soles makes them super flexible. They’re more cushioned under foot than the Dunlops.

WARMTH icy cold in winter weather – the thin rubber and lack of lining means they are always going to struggle against foam or neoprene-lined rivals.

VALUE The Argylls are a well made, classic work welly. They look the part, too, but were a big disappointment – the equally-priced Bekinas were warmer, comfier and grippier.

PRICE £45.00

Dunlop Acifort

QUALITY The heavy, stiff Aciforts keep the water out, but that’s about it. They’re better quality than the Pricemasters, but the finish is unremarkable and the tough plastic material has no insulation qualities at all. Rain run around the ankles and ribbing on the toe should help see them through a few hard winters.

GRIP This is middle-of-the-road, but the painfully hard sole failed to loosen up with age.

FIT/BLISTERS A distinct shortage of cushioning means the flat, jarring sole gives the feet, knees and hips a hard time. On the bright side, their tough design means stonger and sharp objects rarely penetrate the soles, but the sturdy toe also makes them heavy.

WARMTH With no foamy texture or lining in sight they were one of the coldest boots we tried.

PRICE £20.50

Dunlop Purofort

QUALITY The Puroforts are made of higher-grade, softer materials than some of the cheaper options, which makes them more supple and fairly comfortable to wear. The silky fabric interior – not dissimilar to the Bekina – also benefits comfort, but little rubber tugs like you would expect on a tractor tyre hardly short term quality.

GRIP The tread pattern under the ball of the foot is shallow and the sole is solid, so grip is a bit disappointing. The Puroforts also claim to have a ideal toe and molotie, but with little noticeable extra weight it can be nothing more than a slighter lift.

FIT/BLISTERS The fit is almost as disappointing as the Argylls. A lack of any sort of heel cup sees the foot slip around and the bottom of the boot ends up drooping along the ground. They are also loose and short of shape around the ankle.

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PRICE £44.99
Bekina Steplite X

**QUALITY** A surprisingly good-quality finish for a plastic boot, with no dodgy seams and a flexible leg section that almost matched the rubber-made Argyll. Reinforcement up the sides keeps the shape around the calf. 7/10

**GRIP** Great grip with soft rubber lugs and deep tread crisscrossing underneath to cling to slimy surfaces like Marvel’s web-spinning superhero Spider-Man. The sole is also very flexible which helps gain traction on uneven surfaces. Chunky spurs on the back help them on and off. 9/10

**FIT/BLISTERS** Decent arch support and a shaped foot-bed, combined with a heel-hugging cup at the back, make the equally-priced Argylls a laughing stock. They also out-score the second-placed Dunlop Puroforts by a distance and come with a choice of insoles for a snugger fit. 9/10

**WARMTH** Foamy material on the inside provides far more insulation than the Argyll. 8/10

**VALUE** Cracking value compared with the rest. The Bekinas are a solid, all-round work boot and make the others look like a bit of a rip-off. PRICE £46.67

Dunlop Pricemaster

**QUALITY** The basic, slab-sided design is pretty plain Jane but it’s what you’d expect for a few quid. Unfortunately, our pair had a pinprick hole that let water in – they won’t all seep, but it is a pointer to the quality of the boot. 2/10

**GRIP** Traction is bang average, but better than the stiff-soled (and far more expensive) Argyll. 5/10

**FIT/BLISTERS** The bargain boots provide a better fit than expected thanks to a defined heel cup that wraps around the Achilles tendon more effectively than the steep-priced Dunlops. However, the sides are shapeless, and the soles cushionless, so they are not the sort of thing you would want to be trudging about the farmyard in all day. A small spur helps get them off come tea time. 4/10

**WARMTH** No lining and zero insulation, so wear an extra pair of socks if it’s chilly. 3/10

**VALUE** Straight out of the bargain bucket. All-in-all The Dunlop Pricemaster are pretty good value – cheaper and more comfortable than some of the pricier options and perfectly fine for the occasional wearer. PRICE £8.99

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For more information, please contact us:

AS Tractor Ltd.

Unit 2-3, Prospect Way, Victoria Business Park

Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 7PL

Tel: 01785 293334 • Fax: 01785 293108

www.armatrac-uk.com • info@armatrac-uk.com