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FARM WELLY BOOT 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** peruse seven affordable, off-the-shelf options

The wellington boot might be a farming institution, but how much thought really goes into replacing your worn-out rubber work wear?

Some stingy wearers refuse to fork out more than £20 for something seen simply as a means of preventing nasty cases of trench foot, while the more lavish among us will happily throw the fat end of £200 at the best money can buy.

To get a better idea of the winners and losers in the welly war we

raided the shelves of Mole Valley Farmers, Robinsons and Countrywide to collect a mix of boots.

Of course, our selection isn't exhaustive and there is certainly scope to go more expensive if you wish – Le Chameaus and Hunters spring to mind – but our motley crew of boots are mostly designed for work. As usual, the test is by no means scientific – our views are wholly subjective – but it should give a good idea of how each one shapes up.



No Bull safety boot

QUALITY A peculiar boot that looks to have come from a novelty Father Christmas fancy dress kit. They are constructed from a foamy material that makes them feather-light but unfortunately also very poor fitting. **4/10**

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 big spur on the back to help pull the boots off. **5/10**

FIT/BLISTERS Loose fit and inflexible leg does the No Bull's fit score no favours and means they crease in weird places and dig into the shin. The liner shunts around in the shapeless body, though the lining is soft so the blister risk is low. A reinforced toe should offer some protection from clumsy cows. **2/10**

WARMTH Unbeatably warm, thanks to the removable corduroy-topped



4th

sock and the insulation qualities of the foamy outer. **10/10**

VALUE The No Bulls are the welly version of Crocs. They are grossly unfashionable but if you are simply after something that keeps your feet warm and dry during long wet windows then they're actually a strong bet. Fit and shape are their weak points, but they can still do a job.

PRICE £45.00

Caldene Westfield

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. **8/10**

GRIP Decent 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. **8/10**

FIT/BLISTERS The Caldene is a more sensibly priced alternative to the Le Chameau 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. **8/10**



1st FOR LEISURE

WARMTH Heaps of neoprene provides polar-bear-like insulation and beats most work boots when it comes to out-and-out warmth. No chilblains or frostbite here. **9/10**

VALUE A bargain compared with the £170 Le Chameau 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 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. **8/10**

GRIP Traction is the biggest let-down and the sole is so solid and slippery you may as well be skating around the cow shed in bowling shoes. The shallow tread and a shortage of surface area in contact with terra firma means things do not improve with age, and the sole wears down pretty quickly on abrasive surfaces, too. **3/10**

FIT/BLISTERS The straight cut from the top of the calf to the heel means the foot tends to slide up and down while walking and will work your sock into the boot toe. It's not all bad news – the slippery internal material avoided blisters and the rubber outer makes them super flexible. They're more cushioned under foot than the Dunlops. **3/10**



6th

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. **2/10**

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 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 Bekinas – also benefits comfort, but little rubber tails like you would expect on a tractor tyre hardly shout top quality. **7/10**

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 steel toe and midsole, but with little noticeable extra weight it can be nothing more than a slither of tin. **5/10**

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



3rd

which encourages socks to slip off. **4/10**

WARMTH The inner material provides a certain degree of insulation and the maker claims they are some of the warmest about. Realistically, they come in just above average. **7/10**

VALUE Better value than the No Bulls, but still a little steep for our liking.

PRICE £44.99



5th

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. Reinforcement around the ankle and ribbing on the toe should help see them through a few hard winters. **5/10**

GRIP This is middle-of-the-road, but the painfully hard sole failed to loosen up with age. **5/10**

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 stones and sharp objects rarely penetrate the soles, but the steel toe also makes them heavy. **4/10**

WARMTH With no foamy texture or

lining in sight they were one of the coldest boots we tried. **3/10**

VALUE At a smidge more than £20 they look a snip compared with the Argylls, but it is worth remembering that the lack of cushioning could cause you some discomfort long-term.

PRICE £20.50

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 get 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



1st
FOR WORK

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 steeper-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



7th

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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