

Bear Crawler

New York City, NY 1923-25



About 30 companies and tractors have been named after animals, like the modern-day Steiger Panther and Melroe Bobcat. Most, however, were built before 1930 and at least 20 companies adopted animal names so their products might seem wild, independent, and tough.

Today, few tractors are named after animals, probably because there is little need for manufacturers to prove their machines can do the difficult and demanding work of tilling the soil, and also because 900 tractor companies have dwindled to a handful that have loyal followers and successful lines whose names have nothing to do with animals.

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New York City may seem an unlikely place for a tractor company, but in 1923, Bear Tractor Co. began manufacturing 25-35 Crawlers there. These machines sold for \$4,250, weighed about 6,000 pounds, and were powered with Stearns four-cylinder engine with a 4-3/4" x 6-1/2" bore and stroke. Promotional writers touted the Bear's compactness (9'10" x 4'6"), flexibility, six-foot turning radius, and no-trouble track, which moved independently up and down over large objects. The company's motto was "The tractor that delivers its power to the drawbar."

An advertisement for the Bear Tractor claims:

"Speed-Quick Turning-Easy Control
These You Need for Road Patrol
And These You Have in the Bear"

As one man said:

"It seems the Bear is specially made for nearly every job." The truth is, practically every feature in the Bear is of advantage in every kind of tractor work. So, while the Bear is termed a universal tractor, most Bear owners feel it was designed especially for them.

And nowhere is this feeling more pronounced than among the men who are doing road patrol work. If all our other tractor work was eliminated from consideration, it is doubtful that a better tractor could be built at the present time for road patrol.

Not only is the Bear fast, quick at the turn, and easy to control, it supplies cheap power, whether pulling a half load or a full load. Its power flexibility, its efficiency in delivering its power to the drawbar, its economy in fuel and oil consumption, and its low upkeep, as illustrated in the track, are some of the reasons why the Bear supplies cheap power for road maintenance."



Yet in the end, the Bear's price tag may have doomed it – at \$4,250, the Bear was many times more expensive than a multipurpose tractor. In about 1925, the Mead-Morrison Company of East Boston, Massachusetts, bought out the Bear Tractor Co. and ended production on the Bear 25-35. It came out with the Mead Morrison Bear "55," which looked nearly identical to the Bear 25-35.