

TIRES

A large part of the maintenance bill on motorcycles is replacing tires. We all have to deal with that more often mileage wise than with our four wheeled vehicles. Mileage is usually the first item discussed when replacing tires motorcycles. Everyone wants a tire that will last longer than the original ones. That is the subject we will discuss.

The first thing I ask customers that are not happy with their mileage from any make of tire is how often you check the tire pressure. Checking and keeping tire pressure up to manufacturer's recommendations is very important to extending tire life. The type of road surface you normally ride on and how hard you twist the throttle are the next mitigating factors in extending tire life.

Some owner's manuals will give you a recommended pressure set point for solo or two up riding. The 09 and later touring manuals give you just one tire pressure set point which is 36 front and 40 rear, and always they tell you to check and adjust this when tire is cold. Adding air to a hot tire is never a good idea due to accuracy. Some shops are even using nitrogen for inflating tires because pressure is not affected by temperature. However this is not very practical due to cost and availability. Racers have been using nitrogen for decades.

At this dealership we use Dunlop and Metzler tires and various other brands when a customer requests them. The Metzler tire compound is slightly softer than Dunlop but the tire carcass is constructed to carry more air pressure than Dunlop. If the pressure is kept up to specs the surface will run cooler and the tire will last as long as a Dunlop. Tire temperature is the key to making it last. Most riders would not notice a tire that is slightly underinflated but the temp of that tire will rise much higher and the hotter it is the softer the rubber gets and quicker it wears away.

A few reasons why motorcycle tires cost as much or more than some car tires. First not as many bike tires are produced as car tires, secondly the carcass for a motorcycle tire is much more involved to construct. Ask anyone that has changed a bike tire and a car tire and see which one is easier. Sidewalls on bike tires are much stiffer than car tires to prevent lateral movement.

We are seeing more radial tires being used on new bikes. Never mix a bias ply tire and a radial tire on your bike. This could be a disaster waiting to happen. Ride safe but ride often!

Tim Allen