



Get ready for spring!

Now that the warm weather is here to stay, many riders in the northern reaches of the country are faced with getting their bikes back in shape for the riding season.

If you didn't do much more than park your bike on the side of the garage when the first cold winds blew last fall, you've got a little work ahead of you. Suffice it to say that prepping a bike for winter is usually a lot easier than getting an unprepped bike ready for spring. That's because several things have been going on over the past four months that could make your life difficult now.

Foremost is the fuel system. Gasoline is a mixture of volatile chemicals, and when it sits untreated for several months, parts of the mixture can evaporate, leaving behind a brown gunk called varnish. Varnish can clog the small jets inside a carburetor, leading to sluggish performance, hard starting or even no starting. You'll at least want to drop the float bowls on the carbs, dump out the gas that remains, and clean out any residue with carb cleaner. In addition, you may need to unscrew the jets and clean them, too.

Preventing this next year is as easy as squirting a bit of fuel stabilizer into your last tankful before winter. Then run the engine for a few minutes to get treated fuel into the carbs.

If your gas tank was low when you parked the bike last year, it's possible that condensation has formed in it. Draining all the remaining fuel and replacing it with fresh gas is your best bet.

Your battery may well be dead or nearly so. Pull it, add distilled water to any cells that need it, and put it on a trickle charger. You can use a hydrometer to tell when it's ready to use.

You'll also want to be sure that your tires contain the recommended air pressure, that your brakes work smoothly and have adequate fluid, that your chain is oiled and your air filter is clean.

Yes, it's a lot to do. But it's stuff you'd more than likely have to do sometime soon anyway. Consider it getting a jump on your bike maintenance for the year.