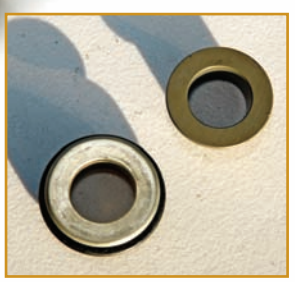
MXA TEAM TESTED
SKF WHEEL SEAL KITS



WHAT IS IT? The *MXA* wrecking crew is enamored with SKF seals. We run them in the forks of our test bikes because we believe they reduce friction, seal better and last longer than the OEM fork seals. So when SKF sent us enough wheel seal kits to fit every *MXA* test bike, we immediately replaced the stock wheel seals with our favorite seal brand.

WHAT'S IT COST? $41.25 (per wheel, front or back).

CONTACT? *www.mx-tech.com* or (877) 850-5114.

WHAT STANDS OUT? Here's a list of things that stand out with the SKF wheel seal kits.

(1) Job one. Much like the Maginot Line, wheel seals are the first line of defense for your wheel bearings. The most important job of a wheel seal is to keep water, grit and gunk out of the bearings of your expensive wheels. OEM seals are adequate but less than stellar at this job. Not only do they let water pass, but they have a considerable amount of stiction where the seal drags on the rolling surfaces. The life of your wheel depends on contaminants staying on the outside, not inside with the working parts.

(2) SKF design. SKF's wheel seals are a two-part design. First, there is an outer cover (more like a CNC-machined collar). It fits snugly into the seal and against the hub, provides full coverage for the seal behind it and is made of a proprietary SKF material. Second is the SKF seal itself. It is unique in that it is smaller in overall size and has SKF's distinctive labyrinth lip design.

(3) Performance. SKF claims that their wheel seals reduce surface friction by 200 times. That number seems farfetched, but remember they are only referring to the friction created at the seals, not in the wheel bearings, axle or other rotating parts. So while 200 times seems like a lot of friction reduction, it isn't that much in the total picture. However, you can test how much difference it makes by spinning an OEM seal-equipped rear wheel side by side with an SKF seal-equipped wheel. The SKF wheel will spin many more times than the stocker. Although we like reductions in drag, our main interest is the bearing's life, and even a cursory examination of the design of the OEM seals and the SKF seal will convince you that the SKF seal will keep dirt out much better than the stock seal.

(4) Installation. To put new wheel seals in your wheels, you have to remove the old seals. The *MXA* test crew used a seal puller for some wheels and a flat-bladed screwdriver for others. Obviously the seal puller was a snap to use, but we had no trouble prying the old seal out with a screwdriver (by taking small bites as we circled around the seal). Installing the new seal is a simple matter; line it up, tap it gently with a rubber mallet, find the right-size socket to use as a driver, and tap it into place. Easy for an experienced mechanic and not too hard for a first-timer.

WHAT'S THE SQUAWK? Price. At $41.25 a wheel, the SKF seals are three times more expensive than replacement OEM wheel seals. They are also better made, better sealing and smoother operating, but costly.

MXA RATING

★★★★★

If you race in mud, sand or silt, this is a five-star product. If you never ride in the rain, it is a three-star product. We could average that out as a four-star product, but instead we believe that a product that works under the worst of conditions is a best buy.