

“When it came time to change the two Strautmann Loader Wagons we did not even consider another make”.



The Strautmann range of products, brought into the UK by St Neots, based RECO, include high output Muck Spreaders, Vertical Mixer Wagons and the Market leading Loader Wagon models.



Chandlers Farm equipment sold their first Strautmann products back in 2008. With the opening last year of the New Lutterworth Branch, which covers a very busy grassland livestock area the Strautmann product range becomes even more relevant to the everyday activities of the Chandlers Farm Equipment group.

The First Strautmann Loader wagon sold was to Kevin Johnson of Johnson and Morris Ltd. Kevin is a contractor working from Wittering in Lincolnshire. Kevin who

works closely with his partner John Morris is happy to discuss his experiences.

In 2008 a contractor friend of Kevin's from Leicestershire suggested that he could do a lot worse then get involved with Silage / Hay harvesting using a Loader Wagon. Kevin went along to the National Grassland Event demonstration that is held at Stoneleigh every three years to investigate.

“We came away interested in three makes of wagon” says Kevin. “We liked the build and features of the Strautmann product. Therefore after consideration we chose a Strautmann Giga Vitesse 1”. The purchase of this first machine was a large gamble. “We ordered it without having a single acre of work booked or planned”.

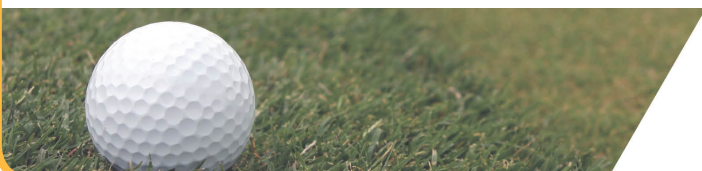
Loader Wagon or Chopper

In that first year they found enough customers to collect 600 acres (250ha) of grass. Previously these customers would have had their grass collected by contractors using Self propelled forage harvesters or, the customers had used their own trailed forage harvester units. Kevin is proud to say that they continue to do the silage work for all the customers that they collected for in that first year.

Kevin says “the first thing customers noticed was how there was no wastage or mess in the fields. The pickup cleared up cleanly and the wide tyres and trailed steering axle meant, even with a fully loaded machine turning on a wet headland, the sward was left undamaged.”

Although some customers were originally sceptical about the thought of a longer chop compared to their previous collection method these concerns were soon overcome. “Once they had experienced the longer chop there were no problems. Over the years a lot of customers have reported a lot less instances of twisted gut, an increase in butter fats in the milk and noticed that, although the cows appear to eat less, they clear up all the feed that is provided, perform well and remain healthy.

Customers also liked the fact that although the output was high the activity in the yards and around the clamps was timely and unhurried. There was not the continual sense of calamity that you get with a forage harvester Self Propelled or trailed operation”.





With staff costs and availability always an issue, in the first year the operation worked well with just Kevin and John working together. "I would be on the wagon and John would be either; mowing, rowing, tedding or on the clamp. We now work with two wagons therefore additional seasonal staff are required but compared to other systems collecting with a Loader wagon means that there is a more efficient use of staff with less men and tractors required. The Fuel efficiency is important to us and the grass produced is good for the cows"

For the second season the area covered increased to 1200 acres (490ha) and another Giga Vitesse wagon was purchased. This second unit was a larger capacity Giga 2. Since then Kevin and John have collected on average 2000 acres (810ha) of grass per year with no real problems at all. Reliability and speed of collection is key. If required we comfortably clear between 60 and 70 acres (25-28ha) per day with each wagon. We could do more, however it depends upon the set up of the farm.



Images supplied by Andy Guy Consulting
Models pictured Giga Vitesse CFS 3601

At the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013 the two original Strautmann Giga wagons were traded in for two new Strautmann Giga Vitesse 3601 CFS models. "When it came time to change The Strautmann Loader wagons we did not even consider another make of wagon. Why would we? A further bonus was that the second hand value for the two older units was very good".

Experiencing "CFS"

"During 2013 we had our busiest season collecting 3000 acres (1215ha) of grass". Kevin adds "with the new CFS wagons we can pick up more grass more easily. With the CFS attachment the angle of the pickup is really shallow and the pickup tines are staggered in a V pattern, this means that the grass has no option other than to be fed smoothly into the rotor behind the pickup. On the new wagons we also chose to have the optional rear pick up guide wheels fitted. They perform really well enabling us to drive faster with less worry for the operator over undulating ground. They help to support the pickup and protect the pickup tines a treat".

Kevin says maintenance is minimal, really just sharpening the blades "it's not a big job. We do it every other day. We turn the double edged blades after every 50 acres to keep the job right. Access is good so this is easily done even in the field".

The two wagons were also used as maize trailers. The wagons owned by Kevin have hydraulic folding front panels and steel floors making them ideal for this task.

When asked how well the wagons tow in the field and on the road Kevin replies without hesitation that he absolutely loves it "even when fully loaded it is a first class experience. You would not know that they are behind you. The axle suspension arrangement works really well even if driving through rough uneven ground at funny angles".

One of the wagons is driven by Fendt 722 220HP and the second unit is driven by a Fendt 820 200HP. Kevin adds "They make a good match for the wagons".

For the future Kevin says "we have to consider if we aim to increase our customer base further, which would probably mean more machines and staff or if we consolidate as we are. With our existing arrangement we offer a premium service to all our customers using premium products. That is how we want to continue".

