

Field Studies 11

GOING THROUGH THE MILL TO FIND THE BEST



After losing their 150 cow dairy herd in the 2001 FMD outbreak and following brother Ian's decision to take a secondment away from the farm, Steven Todhunter and his father John decided not to restock but to concentrate on arable production on the 500 acre Wiggonby House Farm, Wigton, Cumbria.

Current cropping is 200 acres of winter wheat, 200 acres of winter barley and 100 acres of spring barley. To add value to the crop it was decided to purchase a roller mill and sell the rolled grain to local stock farmers, many of whom were no longer growing their own cereals having expanded their dairy enterprises when restocking.

The first machine the Todhunters purchased was a Renn, and whilst it produced an acceptable sample, it was very slow. In autumn 2008 the decision was made to upgrade. Initially they ordered a reconditioned roller mill from a Yorkshire-based manufacturer. After over a year of waiting it had still not arrived so, they visited the Kelvin Cave stand at LAMMA show in January 2010. A follow-up visit from local Kelvin Cave representative Michael Carpenter and a look at a 3yr old machine owned by Carlisle contractor Graham Prudham, helped them decide that a Korte 1000 with 2mm fluted rollers was probably the machine for them. They then found out from a local machinery dealer that a new manufacturer in the area was prepared to give them a mill to evaluate and with a much lower purchase price they decided to give it a try.

"The trial mill arrived but simply did not do what we were expecting", explains Steven, "so after only three days on the farm we were back at Graham Prudham's to have a closer look at the Korte mill in action.

"We could see that, although it was more expensive than the other machines, the build quality was significantly better and it was exactly what we needed to move our business forward. Graham has been very pleased with his mill and the support he has had from Michael and the rest of the Kelvin Cave staff, so we decided there and then that we would order one."

Steven continues: "When the Korte mill arrived we were very impressed with the professional way service engineer Kevin Pocock spent time with us setting the machine up and showing us how to operate and maintain it. He was very thorough, and obviously wanted us to get the best out of the machine. I spoke to him on the phone a few weeks ago just to talk me through adjusting the elevator chain and he obviously knows these machines inside-out as his explanation was spot on.

"We have now processed around 800 tonnes (in 3 months) through the mill and can get 8 tonnes of wheat rolled in about 25 minutes, whereas it was taking over two hours with the old mill, so this allows us to respond more quickly to orders from customers.

The Korte 1000 ready for action.



This tractor consumes just 18L/hr of red diesel to run the crimper.



"Although the appearance of the rolled grain with the fluted rollers is different, all our customers are very happy and there also seems to be much less dust. I have just built my own trailer for the mill and we are now looking to carry out rolling work off-farm as well. The fluted rollers will enable us to process beans, peas, maize etc., so in the future we may even look at formulating simple blends.

When Michael Carpenter last visited us we decided to purchase an applicator to enable us to treat grain at harvest with non-corrosive Propcorn NC. This will allow us longer days combining at home and also open up opportunities for more work away from the farm."

Clearly delighted with the performance of the machine and the support that he and John have received from Kelvin Cave, Steven concludes:

"The Korte 1000 is one of the best things we have ever bought and should save us at least 300 man and tractor hours a year compared to the previous machine. With red diesel at 57p/ltr (May 2010) and fuel use estimated to be about 18L/hr for this type of work, savings in fuel alone will be over £3000, but the true cost including time and tractor depreciation would be nearer £35-40/hr which means the machine will pay for itself easily in a couple of years if it carries on as its going now, it should last much longer."