

Mill-and-mix upgrade transforms the working day

Finishing 800 store cattle on the farm every year and processing all of the stock's grain through a small static mill, the Wilcock family from Gladden Hey Farm in Wigan knew the time had come to upgrade their system.

Comprising a family partnership of David and his son Martin with his two brothers and nephew, the team – which also runs a busy haulage business – was keen to streamline the farming day and cut the hours of labour spent preparing cattle feed.

“The old mill would only process around 1 tonne of grain an hour which meant we had it running for about 28 hours a week,” says Martin. “But when we started looking around for an alternative we found there was very little which offered us the flexibility, ease of operation and the time-saving we wanted.”

They were finally introduced to Michael Carpenter, Kelvin Cave's northern area manager, who explained that the company not only offered a range of Korte and Murska mills which would meet their required throughput, but that the mills could be modified at the company's Somerset workshop to precisely suit the family's needs.

“They opted for the Murska 700 which offers a throughput of 10 to 12 tonnes per hour and can be adapted so that other ingredients can be added after the grain has been processed,” says Michael.

The Wilcocks chose to add a hopper which would be used for their high protein concentrate plus a smaller hopper for minerals, while the framework for an IBC allows molasses to be fed straight into the mix.

“The hoppers are very easy to calibrate via a variable speed hydraulic motor, and the final product is dust-free and palatable, which is important for driving intakes on their ad lib feeding system,” he says.

The M700 mill has now been on the Wilcocks' farm for around three years where it is estimated to have processed around 4,000 tonnes to



date and has transformed the family's working day.

“We feed around 4 tonnes/day and prefer to mix a few small batches each week to keep the feed fresh,” says David. “It takes less than an hour to mill each batch which means a job which used to take 28 hours is now done in around three hours each week.”

With most of the grain from the farm's 500 acres of wheat and barley going through the mill, the family says the machine has lived up to their expectations in every way.

“We're very pleased with its performance and reliability and receive good back-up as Michael has popped in a few times to reset the rollers if the sample has not been to our liking,” says Martin.

He also believes the key to its trouble-free operation is in keeping the machine maintained so he steam-cleans the mixer every six weeks and greases it regularly.

“We also wanted a mill that travelled well on the road and did not have too large a horse power requirement as at peak times there may not be a large tractor in the yard,” adds Martin's

nephew, Thomas, who now does most of the milling. “We find it is economic to run and a 100HP tractor handles it easily and in terms of ease of use and the time it has saved it is probably one of the most useful machines on the farm.”

Martin concurs and says he would happily recommend Kelvin Cave mills and will not look elsewhere when the time comes to trade it in.

The proof of the product is seen in the finished cattle which are mostly sold through Chelford where the family has a good reputation for the quality of its stock.

Most are bought by independent butchers rather the larger processors and as David pulls out the previous week's report it shows that six of the sale's top seven cattle came from the Wilcock family and all were purchased by the same buyer.

Pictured above are Martin Wilcock (right) and his nephew Thomas with their Murska 700 mill- and-mix machine which processes much of their farm's 500 acres of cereals.

