



No Compromises

After a season in the field, we caught up with the first Strautmann Giga Vitesse 02 in the UK, working with Dorset contractor James Vickery.

Running a forage wagon may provide a lower cost alternative to a self-propelled machine but it may also compromise the consistency of the chop. This can lead to longer material in the clamp, affecting fermentation and the palatability of the silage.

Not prepared to accept this, when James Vickery set out to replace his machine last year, providing quality fodder was his priority.

"For years we'd stayed away from clamp silage but after several requests from customers, we purchased our first forage wagon six or seven years ago," he explains. "It picked up the grass fine but we found that a lot of longer material would escape through the knives, so what ended up in the clamp was a right mix."

Having decided to make the change, Mr Vickery says that he looked at a number of different companies. However, once he'd seen the Strautmann wagons working in the field, he believed they were the right machines for him.

"I was confident that it would produce a better quality product for our customers and, ultimately, as a contractor, that's what it is all about," he says.

He placed an order for a 36m³ Giga Vitesse 3602 with local dealer Halse South West. The machine arrived in time for first cut in 2018 and it immediately made an impression on him.

"Despite being bigger and heavier than our old forage wagon, it takes a lot less power to drive," Mr Vickery says (the company recommends a minimum of 145hp). "I'm convinced this is down to the way the Strautmann draws the crop through the chopper."

The Giga Vitesse has a 2.25m pick-up (25cm wider than his previous machine) and is equipped with the Continuous Flow System rotor. This is designed with fins at its outer ends, effectively giving the stream of material a square

edge and even depth across the full width.

"The smoother flow is really noticeable and I believe it's why we're getting a more consistent chop," he explains. "Despite it being the same capacity as our old machine, it loads so much more evenly and therefore carries a lot more."

Coming with a high specification as standard, the only extra on Mr Vickery's Giga Vitesse was a pair of rollers behind the pick-up to aid in contour-following and avoid scalping the ground or breaking tines.

However, because the machine arrived with a European style, high level hitch the geometry wasn't quite right.

"The Strautmann might not be the cheapest option on the market but the quality of chop and the improved efficiency of the whole operation certainly pays off for us as contractors and for our customers," says James Vickery (pictured above).



"As soon as we identified the problem, both the Halse service guys and Strautmann UK got it modified and it now follows the ground perfectly," he says. "I really can't fault the back up – having people on the end of the phone who know the machine is an absolute Godsend."

Mr Vickery also singles out the knife protection system for praise. Rather than springs, the Giga Vitesse uses a cam clutch on each knife so that it can individually trip. When this happens, the control box then alerts the operator.

"Because there's no back pressure on the knife, it is instantly drawn out of work, limiting the damage to one spot on the blade. With just one knife tripped, it also means you can keep running and reset the system at the end of the row," he says.

And when it comes to sharpening, things couldn't be simpler according to Mr Vickery.

"You can drop the knives out of work hydraulically and get under the body to remove them. There's plenty of clearance under there too," he explains. "The knives are double sided, which is great because you can reverse them, but I've found that they do not need sharpening that often and this must be down to the protection system."

He also says that the Giga Vitesse is particularly stable on banks, despite riding high on 710/50 R26.5 tyres, and that the passive steering system on the rear axle helps to avoid damage on the headland and can be locked on side slopes to avoid crabbing.

"Even though it's carrying more, the new wagon never leaves a mark and the steering axle means there is no scuffing. It's really manoeuvrable around tight yards too," Mr Vickery says.

Though he admits it was not the cheapest option, Mr Vickery believes that the switch to a Strautmann wagon will pay off quickly.

"We needed to improve the quality of the job and the Strautmann has certainly done that, resulting in better quality silage for our customers," he concludes. "But it's also improved the efficiency of the whole operation. We're now filling to full capacity – it is truly better for everyone." ■

With plenty of underbody clearance and easy access to the knife bank, blade changes are straightforward.



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