



New generation, total revolution.

2020 JAGUAR 970

Shropshire is home to some of the UK's largest dairy herds and many smaller ones besides. That's no coincidence given that the county's fertile soils and damper than average climate produce some of the heaviest crops of grass in the country.

CONTRACTOR ADAM RICHARDS KNOWS THIS BETTER THAN ANYONE.

"We're incredibly lucky to live in one of the best grass growing areas of the country but as contractors that can present a few headaches," he explains.

"Whether it's first-, second- or third-cut grass, we seem to get monster rows behind our four-rotor rakes. While early on in the season it's all about getting sheer volumes through

the chopper, later on with stemmy, straggly, sticky stuff it becomes even more challenging just getting it to feed."

THE ARRIVAL THIS SEASON OF A NEW GENERATION JAGUAR 970 HAS MADE THE JOB THAT LITTLE BIT EASIER.

While it might have the same model number painted on the side, the 2020 machine is a totally different beast to the three-year-old 970 it replaced. The most drastic change was a switch from a Mercedes Benz V8 to a straight-six MAN.

"I'll admit that I was concerned about the change in engines but my fears proved totally unfounded," says Adam.

"Despite having two fewer cylinders, the torque this new motor puts out is phenomenal – it just hangs on in there no matter far forward you push the stick.

"That's had a big impact on our daily throughputs – we can now comfortably chop 330-350 acres of heavy first-cut grass in 12-14 hours. In fact, to reliably make the most of the 970's output we now run two four-rotor rakes ahead of it to ensure there are no bottlenecks.

"We need to push it as hard as we can – if there's nothing coming out of the spout then we're not getting paid."

Perhaps one of the biggest surprises is that all this extra output hasn't resulted in extra diesel use.

"We felt that the old 970 was pretty good on fuel when we first got it but this new machine blows it out of the water. In decent first-cut grass we'd generally need at top up after about 12 hours work. With the new chopper I'll get out of the cab after 14 hours in the seat and still have 15-20% left in the tank.

"Running alongside our nine-year-old 870 you really realize how far things have moved on. On one farm this season the 970 did 67 acres in the time it took the 870 to do 33 acres. And despite having chopped over double the acreage, the new machine burnt less diesel than the old one."

WHILE MUCH OF THIS THRIFTINESS IS ATTRIBUTED TO THE NEW ENGINE, IT'S ACTUALLY DOWN TO A COMBINATION OF FACTORS INCLUDING SMOOTHER CROP FEED AND INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY.

"I really like the way Dynamic Power system works to fuel the engine as required. You can feel how it kicks the torque in as it comes under load, well before the machine is dragged to its knees. But in lighter patches it backs off and isn't burning diesel unnecessarily.

"The other big factor that saves on juice is the rev limiter which knocks back the throttle at the headlands and then revs back up again as you drop the header."

Pick-up and variable header drive

"We were lucky enough to get hold of one of the first of the new generation of grass pick-ups with our 2017 machine. It totally revolutionised the job for us," explains Adam.

"With its redesigned frame and clever sensor technology, it was so much better able to follow undulating ground – which we've got a lot of. But much more important than that was the crop feed – the big auger and beefed up slip clutch meant everything ran in so much better and we weren't having to replace the clutch partway through the season."

"The service from MORRIS CORFIELD is absolutely phenomenal. We can call at any time - day or night - and we're hardly ever held up for more than an hour. It's an outstanding relationship that we massively value."

Adam Richards

While the output of any forager is governed by what's on the front of it, it's a combination of factors that contribute to keep it running on song. The JAGUAR 970's variable speed header drive has made a huge difference in making sure the machine is kept at its maximum potential.

"It's great having all this power but we need to be able to make the most of it. Variable header speed has made a huge difference in ironing out lumpy swaths coming into the machine. I just set it in auto feed mode and let it get on with the job itself. No matter what you throw at it, it just seems to cope with it – it's a massive improvement."

In a similar vein, the JAGUAR's hydraulically-tensioned feed rollers play a big part in evening out crop flow to the drum.

"We find that we're now able to push the chopper that much harder because the flow of grass is that much more uniform and you don't get that horrible surging effect and feed roller bounce that you would normally in lumpy crops.

"We get some pretty ridiculous swaths of chewy, knotty grass mid-season that don't make for an easy ride. But the combination of the new pick-up, variable speed header drive and hydraulic pre-compression means we can now tackle it at a sensible pace.

"The fact that we can push the machine harder means we get more done in a day which is pretty important given the increasingly trickier seasons we're getting."

Cab and controls

"I'm a big fan of the new control set-up with the new mushroom-top joystick and touchscreen computer. It makes it so much easier to tweak settings on the move and keep the machine running at full chat all the time. I just hit the appropriate part of the machine picture and instantly the settings menu I need pops up. There's no stopping or slowing down, I can just keep pushing on."

Why CLAAS?

"With CLAAS we always know what we're getting. Having had Jaguars since the 1980s we know the machines are reliable and always seem to exceed our expectations in terms of output.

"But much more important than that is the back-up we get. The service from MORRIS CORFIELD is absolutely phenomenal. We can call at any time - day or night - and we're hardly ever held up for more than an hour. It's an outstanding relationship that we massively value."

Would you have another?

"Each year our workload grows and grows and so for a couple of seasons we've been looking at changing our old 870 but we haven't felt we can justify it until now.

"However having seen how the technology has moved on with these latest generation 900s and the fuel savings that brings, it's likely we'll be looking at another for next season."

