

Hard working ARION 420



Chris Fogden with his CLAAS ARION 420

Feeding, bedding and looking after some 1200 outdoor sows as well as their offspring is a fairly rigorous task that's hard on both men and machines.

It's a job that is difficult enough when it's dry but when the winter weather sets in things can get even tougher, explains Suffolk pig producer Chris Fogden.

A tenant on the Euston Estate near Thetford, he's keenly aware of the importance of having dependable machinery to keep his business running smoothly.

"Having strong, comfortable and, most importantly, reliable kit to do the work is critical to us," he explains.

"At any one time we might have up to 3000 hungry mouths to feed so if just one machine lets us down we're in trouble.

"Over time we've fine-tuned our daily workload to be as efficient as possible. Central to this are three 100hp loader tractors which do all the day-to-day chores, backed up by a CLAAS SCORPION telehandler."

The tractors of choice are all CLAAS ARION 420s, each of different vintages but all equipped with FL100 loaders.

WHY ARION 420S?

"In our work we rarely need heaps of power but need a

machine that is robust enough to cope with months of being up to its axles in mud and muck.

"We've tried other options but found that the 420 is the ideal combination of strong build quality and a light footprint. All fitted with loaders, they're incredibly versatile, each one able to undertake any of the regular tasks on the unit."

Although the basic hardware might all be the same, specification varies between the three.

While all are fitted with FLEXPLOT multifunction joystick, two have the added benefit of being CIS-specification machines. While these retain mechanical spool-valves, they have a clear A-pillar colour display to allow operators to set the tractor up as they wish for each particular job. More important than that, this extra spec. includes CLAAS' SMART STOP brake-to-neutral feature.

"The start-stop nature of the feeding job is hard on both the tractor and driver, requiring constant clutch use.

"Having SMART STOP on our feeder tractor has made a huge difference – you just hold the machine on the brakes and the transmission automatically de-clutches. Lift off the anchors and it smoothly takes up drive once again – on to the next pen."

CAB AND CONTROLS

"In the middle of winter with sub-zero temperatures and the rain coming sideways we need to make the job as pleasant as possible. A decent cab with good heating and easy to operate



Farm Facts

FARM	Fogden Farms, Euston Park near Thetford
FARMED AREA	48ha
LIVESTOCK	1,200 Landrace x Large White sows producing ca. 30,000 weaners a year
STAFF	Chris Fogden plus 4 full-timers and 1 part-timer
TRACTORS	3 x CLAAS ARION 420s with FL100 loaders
TELEHANDLER	CLAAS SCORPION 736

controls is really important in making what can be a pretty grueling job bearable.

“We like the simplicity of the mechanical spool-valves and the convenience of having all the key transmission and linkage controls on the armrest mounted loader joystick. It’s particularly responsive and we really appreciate having the facility to double up the hydraulic pumps to boost oil-flow when needed.

“One of the most useful features is the engine speed preset. Because our feeder trailer requires an exact flow of oil to accurately meter out grub, it’s critical we always use the same engine revs that it was calibrated at. Being able to simply hit a button each time means there’s no risk of getting it wrong.”

HAVE THE ARION 420S BEEN RELIABLE?

“We’re generally changing tractors out before they hit the 5000-hour point to and we’ve hardly had any issues with the six that we’ve had.

“That’s pretty impressive given the nature of the work they do. They go for months on end plastered in muck so they probably don’t see the grease gun as often as they should.

“But despite not having the most rigorous maintenance schedule they prove reliable time-after-time. They’re tough little machines really.

“We do opt for the MAXI CARE service and warranty package because it provides us with one way of fixing our costs. I spend my life trying to manage risk, whether its pool-buying feed, fixing contract weaner prices or servicing machines – that way I

can accurately budget to ensure we make some margin at the end of the year.”

WHY CLAAS?

“Up until ten years ago we ran a different breed of loader tractor but weren’t getting the back-up we needed. So we made the switch to CLAAS tractors because we knew the level of service we’d get from MANNNS would be second-to-none.

“Their mechanics are always really clued up and are out to us as quick as a flash. Of course being so close to CLAAS HQ helps - we never have any wait for parts.

“We’ve now had six CLAAS loader tractors and they’ve just got better and better. I knew a few people running them previously and no-one had a bad word to say about them but until you try something on your own farm it’s always a bit of an unknown.

“Opting for CLAAS tractors was definitely a good move. Of course there are always things you’d change but we’ve seen these ARION tractors evolve hugely over the last decade – it’s been a case of continuous improvement on CLAAS’ part.

WOULD YOU HAVE ANOTHER ARION?

“Given how the six we’ve had a have performed and the continuing improvements CLAAS has made, almost certainly.

“Of course it depends on the deal on the day but these ARIONs represent really good value for money and seem to

hold their value well so we get a good trade-in price. On top of that CLAAS tends to offer some really good finance deals to make it affordable.

“But ultimately the decision always comes down the back-up – MANNNS are just fantastic on that front.”

