



# Precision chop revenue boost

**By changing from a forage wagon to running his own JAGUAR 840 forager, not only has Richard Threlfell sorted out the problem of cattle sifting through their ration, but as a result, yields have increased and monthly revenue boosted by around 10%.**

Running a 350-cow fully housed pedigree Holstein herd milked using six robots installed five years ago, in addition to a further 450 followers and beef cattle, for many years Richard has relied on a forage wagon for his silage making. While the system was cheap to run, one of the drawbacks was cattle sifting out the concentrates and leaving the silage.

"This was particularly apparent with the mix for the dry cows coming back into the herd, where we were seeing higher levels of milk fever," says Richard. "Speaking with my nutritionist Philip Robertson at New Breed UK, he suggested that to avoid this, in addition to using shorter, precision chopped silage, at calving the ration should also include straw and blends. We tried that, took the expensive cake out and it has worked well ever since.

"On the back of that, we then turned our attention to the main herd and the ongoing battle we had been having to increase intake and reduce sorting. We tried things like adding molasses but again he said the best solution was to change to shorter, precision chopped silage and put forward costings to show that if I made the change and invested in a forage harvester, it would quickly pay for itself due to an increase in yield."

Having checked and double checked the figures, Richard took the plunge and contacted RICKERBY about buying his own JAGUAR forager, rather than rely on a contractor. "I was a bit apprehensive about what a forager would cost, but was quite surprised by the figure that came back."

## NO SORTING

With the order for the JAGUAR 840 placed last March, RICKERBY initially lent Richard a JAGUAR 970 until his new forager could be delivered later in the spring. "I think when my neighbours saw the 970 they really were questioning what I was doing," says Richard.

"All our silage has gone through the forager this year and the results have been fantastic. We chopped at 10mm and now see no sorting whatsoever. The results have exceeded my expectations and when I did the costings I was convinced that I had got them wrong.

"Overall, we are hitting all our quality targets and due to the increase in milk yield and savings in the amount of concentrates now used in the mix, we have seen at least a 10% increase in revenue, even at the current milk price of 33p/litre (March 2026)."

## MILK YIELD INCREASE

"Milk from forage has gone up by 4 litres a cow, concentrate usage has dropped to 0.08kg/litre and overall milk yield has increased by 2.9 litres a cow. You can see that the cows just take a full mouthful every time and we don't get any sorting at all now. There is no waste, forage intake has increased, the cows' rumens are full all the time and herd health has been increased. Also with the dry cows, the transition into the milking herd has been considerably easier.

"Also the shorter chop takes up far less space in the clamp and for the sake of the sanity of my nephew, who does the buckraking, it's a good sight easier to clamp! Yes, it will be more expensive to run than a forage wagon, but by having our own forager, it gives me control over our silage making and also gives me options such as maize or whole crop which we are considering for this year."

Supporting the JAGUAR, Richard runs a DISCO front and rear mower combination, plus a LINER 2900 rake. Generally aiming to take four cuts of around 160ha, the other advantage of running their own forager is that rather than have to cut the lot in one go for a contractor, they can just pick their days, then knock down 80ha so as not to have too much grass left on the ground in front of the forager.

"RICKERBY have been great in helping us and I know that if ever we have a problem, there will be someone at the end of the phone to help. I was also able to go to Harsewinkel and see how the foragers and other machinery is built and the control they have over the quality. It was all very impressive and really gives you a lot of confidence in what you are investing in," concludes Richard.