

KRONE BIGPACK BALER CRITICAL TO QUALITY HAYLAGE PRODUCTION

Well-made haylage is the best feed in the world for horses, insists Andrew Elliott – its dust free, easy to handle, palatable and has a high nutritional value. But, he adds, the emphasis is on how it is made.

Based at Edmunds Farm, Mill Lane, Balcombe, Sussex, Mr Elliott has been involved in haylage production for a number of years and, as such, appreciates perhaps more than most the care and attention it takes to produce top quality produce.

And on the basis that 'you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear', he says the starting point for good haylage is the quality of the grass used to make it.

"We grow about 300 acres of rye grass for haylage production," he says. "To make sure it retains its quality we re-seed a third of the acreage each year – sowing it into cultivated ground in the early autumn."

The haylage business also extends beyond the farm with a big square baling contracting service which sees him mowing, tedding and baling for other growers – some of whom may be up to 20 miles away.

"In an average year I would reckon on making a total of 7000 haylage bales along with 3000 hay bales and up to 2000 bales of straw," he says. "It is a workload which sees us taking first cut haylage at the end of May/beginning of June and working through the summer to hay crop and then onto straw although it's not usually so clearly defined as that."

With such a large number of bales to make, Mr Elliott is the first to concede there is a need for a good reliable baler which can handle moist grass, as well as it can hay and straw.

"Essential as this clearly is, I also needed one which produced sensible sized bales that could be wrapped and handled reasonably easily – not the enormous one-tonne-plus bales which may suit some farming systems but certainly not the haylage market," he says.

The baler of choice was the Krone BigPack 890XC which produces a bale with a cross-section of 80cm x 90cm and a length which is set to 120cm - 150cm according to customer requirements. This, he says, equates to a haylage bale weighing between 280kg and 400kg.

Although fitted with 16-blade chopping unit, this is only used occasionally when he is asked to bale silage used as winter feed for sheep but haylage is left full length. Purchased at the start of last year's season, Mr Elliott reports that the key feature of the 890 is its ability to produce a well-shaped, tidy bale with a uniform density throughout.

"That's what you expect of a baler and that's what this one achieves," he says.

He also pays tribute to the cam-free pick-up which not only rotates at a faster speed and is likely to be less vulnerable to breakdowns, but is also unaffected by changes in windrow size. Packer and feeder tines move the crop into the pre-compression chamber which, when full, conveys it to the bale chamber.

"The pre-compression chamber has an automatic overload clutch," he explains. "Should a blockage in the feed chamber occur it can be removed without leaving the cab – you just reduce the pto speed and the cam-type clutch re-sets itself automatically and saves time all round."

With haylage ready to bale when it reaches 70% dry matter – it normally takes five days of wilting to achieve this – it's crucial to move in with the baler at this optimum time and just keep going. Mr Elliott says his best day ever was when he made over 1000 bales in one working day.

"My plan is to keep this baler for a number of years," he says. "The quality of build is such that there should be few problems – but should there be so, I have the confidence in Krone and my dealer to get us going again."

"The BigPack 890XC is a baler that even when you are asking everything of it in terms of output, it leads you to believe it is still operating well within itself."



BigPack
890XC

Andrew Elliott