NEW KRONE TANDEM AXLE BALER ACHIEVES OUTPUT IN DIFFICULT WORKING CONDITIONS

Farmers and contractors will not need to be reminded that last year was a testing time for both man and machine – a time when heavy, persistent rainfall managed to turn even the easiest working land into areas where field operations were at best difficult and at worst, impossible.

For Iain Green, based near Elgin, Moray, it was, as for most growers, a matter of soldiering on and taking advantage of any let up in the weather which could allow work to progress.

Mr Green runs a mixed farm which runs to 3000 acres in three units spaced about six miles apart. Half the area is down to cereals – winter wheat, winter barley and spring barley – and the other half is used by the livestock – 460-head beef suckler herd, 140 pedigree Simental, 500-ewe breeding flock and 380 sows.

"One of the most important crops we have on the farm is the straw we get from the cereals and we tend to bale all of it," he explains. "The livestock use a vast quantity of it during the winter when they are housed."

Bearing in mind the stop-go nature of the harvesting season, Mr Green believes it was both timely and fortunate he had been given the opportunity to try out a Krone Comprima baler as part of the manufacturer's test program for this new round baler.

"This machine was shod on tandem axles which not only helped to reduce rolling resistance and compaction in the field but also gave it tremendous stability when it was towed along the road," he says. "The air brakes also added to its overall safety when transporting the baler from field to field."

The Comprima V150XC is a variable chamber baler which can produce bales with diameters from 1m up to 1.5m and among its key features is a pick-up which does not employ a cam track to draw the tines in. Instead, they simply rotate and feed the crop to the rotor cutter.

"There's certainly less to worry about mechanically and they rotate a lot faster than conventional pick-ups," he says. "Which means it makes a tidy job of lifting the crop into the baler."

The spring-suspended, floating pick-up runs on two wheels so that ground contours are followed and there is a roller crop guard which evens out the crop as it enters the baler.

While the Comprima's main task is to bale straw produced by the farm's combine harvester and its 30ft header – 10,000 bales are made - it is also used to bale haylage which is fed to the pedigree Simental bulls. The main bulk of the silage is made in the clamp.

"In a more normal year we would also make some hay," he says. "But not in last year's weather."

The V150 XC baler is fitted with a chopping unit which can be specified with 26 or 17 knives but, to date, with haylage and straw to bale, Mr Green has chosen not to use them, although he has not discounted its use for future seasons.

However, one of the main features of the baler which should never be discounted is Krone's NovoGrip bale feed system which combines the bale feed strength of chain and slat elevators with the quiet running of belt systems.

"It's a system which certainly produces high density bales with a uniform shape that ensures they stack and handle well," he says. "And there's no denying the Comprima is a lot quieter to operate than other balers we have used."

In terms of output, Mr Green reckons that in straw the baler is making up to 70 bales an hour but he points out that it depends on field size and the prevailing conditions.

"It's an output which I think is acceptable and one which last year helped us to take full advantage of any improvement in the weather although, I have to say, there were occasions when we were baling some pretty horrid, wet material," he says.

Mr Green adds that in his opinion there is very little to criticise or change on the Comprima.

"It produces evenly sized high density bales with the minimum of fuss," he says. "The baler is built well and maintenance requirements are low and, should you ever manage to block the intake, it is simply a matter of lowering the floor of the chamber to clear it."