

# RIDDELL BROS WAGON NEWS

## “I’m more than happy with the Super Vitesse II wagon I purchased last year”

Robert Logan milks 100 cows on the 165 acre Valley View grassland farm at Rasharkin near Ballymena in Co. Antrim.

Three cuts of silage are taken each year from 75 acres - supplemented by unchopped round bale silage made from small parcels of grazing grass which have got ahead of the stock. The silage forms the main diet for his 100 cows and 60-80 followers.

For a number of years, Robert Logan used a contractor with a self-propelled forage harvester for silage production - feeding grab loads to the cattle in a feeding passages. He subsequently invested in a Strautmann 1050 Vertimix.

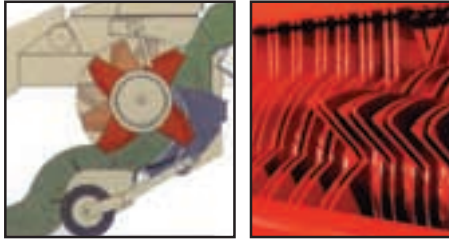
He recently bought a Strautmann Super Vitesse 2 forage loader wagon in time for 2005 second and third cuts.

Harvesting grass at the optimum time with a two-man system and taking advantage of the digestibility benefits from feeding his cows longer forage were all motivating factors. The Strautmann tub mixer’s ability to chop and mix both unchopped silage and straw bales with pit silage and concentrates also encouraged Robert Logan to consider buying a Strautmann forage loader wagon.

A Strautmann Super Vitesse 2 wagon was purchased in time to harvest second cut silage in June, 2005.

How did the wagon perform in the field on his 120hp tractor?

“I’m happy with the performance down the swath. Second cut yield was similar to first cut this year - we cut the grass with a 10ft. mower conditioner and combined two swaths into one with a twin rotor rake after wilting. The rake was set to move both swaths - that’s essential for making good quality wagon silage as the action mixes the stems well and provides a more even wilt. “We have a Valtra 120 tractor on the wagon -I was a bit surprised how well she could lift the swath - we were achieving 8 to 10kmh most of the time”



*Strautmann claim their Super Vitesse has a low power requirement. The two banks of knives are fed via a strong single crop feed rotor fitted with 10mm thick star-shaped tines each with four lobes arranged in a spiral pattern.*



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*Commented Robert Logan*

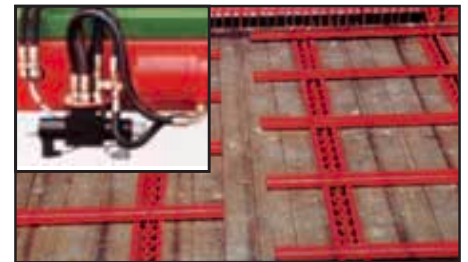
How quickly were the swaths cleared from the field? Did the feed rotor cope with any lumps in the swath? Could two men handle the entire harvesting and clamping operation?

“I’d go along with Strautmann’s claim that the wagon is easy to drive. We have one man and a 120hp tractor clearing chopping and carting 4 acres an hour and one man on the clamp - it’s a genuine 2-man system that compares favourably with the self-propelled set-up.

We had rain threatening and I cleared all 80 acres in 20 hours. In third cut, we cleared 30 acres in 7 hours - so I’m pleased with the throughput and the low power requirement. The feed system copes well with any man-made lumps in the swath.”

**“The spiral feed rotor takes anything through it”**

“If you get a blockage, it’s in the knife banks. All you need do is drop the knife banks down hydraulically and the lump goes straight through.”



**“We were never stopped for more than a few seconds**

*The floor on the super Vitesse 2 has four chain tracks with a tensile strength of 11 tonnes. The 2-speed floor is hydraulically driven.*



*The tandem bogie axles are sprung with the axles mounted in asymmetrical fixed bearings - shifting the centre of gravity to the rear and reducing the loading force on the front axle.*

*Continued overleaf...*



*The long sabre shaped knives in the double bank chopping unit are spaced 37mm apart to provide a shorter chop. The knife banks lower hydraulically for easy maintenance. The shape of the knives and interaction with the feed rotor provides a substantial reduction in power requirement compared to other wagons.*



# 200 Acres later...

How did the wagon perform on the road and at the clamp? What about chop length - how well did the longer silage consolidate in the clamp?

"I'm happy with the chop length - I saw the Strautmann demonstrated with only half the knives in and I was happy with that chop length. You can go as hard as you like with it on the road; my average distance from field to pit is three quarters of a mile and you're soon there."

**"It takes only one minute to unload at the clamp."**

"The way to make good wagon silage is to consolidate well and double seal the pit. We used the Matbro shovel to form the clamp - we've been feeding the second cut silage recently and there's been very little waste. The second cut pit analysis showed 13.6% protein at 35% dry matter with 11.6ME."

**"The silage has proved to be very stable, the cattle clear the entire ration and I'm pleased with the results."**

How have the cows performed in the move from precision chopped silage to forage wagon silage?

"The mix in the tub from the wagon silage is dead on. I don't want the grass too short - that's not good for the cows. You can soon chop wagon silage shorter in the Vertimix. The precision chop mix did feed out more evenly, but you soon get used to the technique for evenly feeding the wagon silage."



Strautmann claim their long knives have a low maintenance requirement. How frequently did Robert Logan sharpen the knives?

"We did 200 odd acres with the wagon this season and never sharpened the knives. The knives are surprisingly long - which may account for their good performance."



**"I'm happy with the speed down the swath. We were doing 8-10 kmh most of the time - down a 20 foot swath with a 120hp tractor"**

Robert Logan's experience of combining a Vertimix with a Super Vitesse forage wagon is one example of how modern day Irish Farmers are finding ways to handle their silage production using the minimum of man power. Food for thought!

If you would like to see more information on the two machines used by Robert Logan or any of the other Strautmann product then please visit the I.A.M. website: [www.iam.ie](http://www.iam.ie)

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