

Member Profile



"Buying two trailed sprayers offered us huge output," says Ben Larter.

A few age-related breakdowns piled on the pressure, leading to Ben and his father, John, looking for a much more suitable solution. "We used to ask ourselves what's going to go wrong with the sprayer today?" says John Larter. Convinced that they had to buy new to avoid reliability issues, the obvious answer was a bigger self-propelled sprayer.

"We had demos from Deere, Agrifac, Bateman, Amazone, and we also jokingly said to Deere's team that they should bring a trailed sprayer too, which opened the door to a few other models, including Amazone and Landquip."

Although mentioned in jest, the trailed sprayer demos were to provide the catalyst for change at Rookery Farm.

Over the months that followed, the Larters continually questioned what they wanted to achieve and repeatedly kicked around their available options.

"Should we keep the RB35 and add a trailed machine? Should we go big with one self-propelled? Or should we go for two trailed sprayers?" he asks. "If we had one of each, the convenience of a self-propelled would result in it always being used first, and the trailed machine would be an occasionally used filler.

"But then the option of two trailed sprayers would give us huge output potential," he adds.

The turning point came when John Larter was given quotes for a new self-propelled sprayer.

"I questioned what we would gain by spending over £200,000 on a high capacity self-propelled sprayer," explains John. "Road speed was an obvious benefit, but there are lots of narrow roads and lanes around here where 50kph is unachievable."

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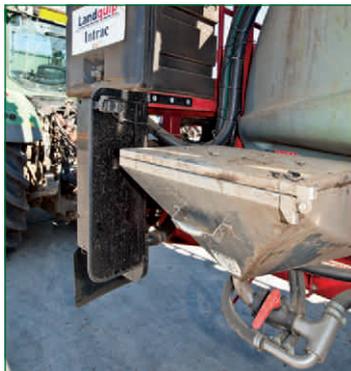
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Landquip fitted deflector plates to keep mud off the induction hopper...



... and also made these mudguard extensions for the sprayer's rear axle.



The Larters' 6,000-litre, 36m Landquip InTrac trailed sprayers are identical.



A trip to the local DIY store yielded suitable storage boxes for spare parts.

On-farm demos also provided a chance to run the sprayers over the farm's weighbridge, with tanks filled and booms fully opened.

"It was an eye-opener to compare axle weights between systems," says Ben. "A trailed 6,000-litre Landquip behind our Deere 6210R weighed 21 tonnes laden, with four tonnes on the tractor's front axle and a very even 8.5 tonne split on both the tractor's rear axle and the sprayer's axle.

"This proved to us how much heavier the self-propelled sprayers were on their rear axles, when fully laden," he adds.

The Larters also agreed that a self-propelled would need to run with a bowser to make the most of productivity and to reduce downtime.

"It didn't take much to convince us that two booms and two tanks kept two men working far more efficiently than paying one man to sit on the headland for hours.

"Our final decision to go with Landquip came down a number of reasons," he says. "The Alu-light Boom saved a lot of weight than the equivalent steel boom, and we felt this was well-suited to liquid fertiliser, particularly to fight corrosion. Then there was the company's can-do attitude, their ability to change and modify the sprayer to give us exactly what we wanted, and the fact that back-up and support is local."

An added dimension was the farm's requirement to hire in an extra tractor during harvest to meet seasonal peaks. And the potential £50,000 saving from buying two high-specification trailed sprayers instead of one self-propelled, would go a long way towards buying that additional tractor.

"One trailed sprayer was almost a third of the cost of a self-propelled," says Ben. "And with five different fill points around the farm and four locations for liquid fertiliser storage, we can send two

sprayers working in completely different directions. We've also saved over £10,000 per year on tractor hire too."

Plant Larter Farms' two sprayers, supplied by Richard Abbott of Landquip, are identical except for their drawbars. Where one has a conventional drawbar for use with the 6210R, the other uses a Scharmüller ball and spoon hitch on the farm's Fendt 724.

When it comes to technology, both sprayers are equipped with 18 sections in two metre increments, with full auto-section control and stop/start capability through Landquip's Xenius touchscreen guidance system. Ben Larter chose not to have Norac boom height control fitted to either sprayer.

"There is a bit of flex in aluminium booms at this width, which could lead to a Norac system over-reacting," he says. "The boom rides very well anyway and it does have the benefit of boom ride assist, which lifts at the headland when turning."

Auto steering guidance is also in use on both tractors, and he believes this is better value than a system exclusively attached to a self-propelled sprayer.

"We'll get much more value from guidance on our tractors," he explains.



Modified windscreen wiper on the farm's Fendt 724 keeps the screen cleaner.

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"If one of the tractors or sprayers suffer a problem, there will always be another machine that can carry on with applications."

Despite losing some of the jump on and go convenience of a self-propelled model, hitching and unhitching is no more tedious than any other implement.

"We don't have one tractor for every implement, so hitching a trailed sprayer on and off is no big deal," he adds.

With a combined total of 12,000 litres and 72m of boom, the farm has yet to fully exploit the two sprayers' output potential. The first model arrived in late 2014, with the second one following in early 2015.

However forward speeds have already been eased back in the knowledge that the farm has enough capacity to remain on top of spraying and spreading duties. "Without the pressures of having to try and keep up with the workload, we have dropped back from 16-17km/hr to 12-14km/hr," he says. "We now have the rare luxury of capacity to spare, which gives an opportunity for further expansion. We could probably handle another 1,000 acres."

"With a more flexible approach from having two identical sprayers, we may well use one just for spraying and the other for liquid fertiliser," says Ben Larter.



Ben Larter's Fendt 724's cab contains a veritable feast of screens and buttons.

While the sprayers' honeymoon period has not yet worn off, Mr Larter says Landquip has since added extras to both sprayers that he and operator Peter Tye would have sought to do themselves.

"Landquip has added LED worklights to the boom, mudguard extensions, a metal protective plate in front of the induction hopper to keep mud off the lid and we're still experimenting with their cameras to determine the best areas to watch," he says.

Mr Larter accepts that in-field manoeuvrability is a compromise compared with a self-propelled, but with the help of cameras, it's not a major hurdle.

"It's not quite as easy to back into a corner," he says. "But we have the capacity of one and a half self-propelled sprayers at two-thirds of the cost. And we can be in two places at once. What's not to like about this?"



Cameras around the sprayer add an extra dimension to spraying visibility.

Operator User Rating

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