

MÜTHING USER STORY

As part of a high-yielding dairy unit, introducing front and rear Müthing mulchers has helped give grasslands a boost during the dry spring and summer

The Earl of Plymouth Estate is a substantial farming enterprise based in and around Ludlow. It covers some 2,100ha, with 1,200ha in an arable rotation, and grazing and silage ground to feed the 300-head dairy unit and about 2,500 sheep. It's also heavily diversified, with a quarry, farm shop, pub and hotel, to name just a few of the various income streams.

Winter wheat makes up the bulk of the rotation, with spring wheat, which is wholecropped for the cattle, some spring oats, poppies, borage and lupins. The latter is milled on site to supplement the cattle feed. Due to a comprehensive soil management plan, the farm moved away from root crops and maize, and through Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) agreements has established 6m margins around most of the fields, with 12m margins where ground goes up to the Corve, Onny and Teme rivers.

The area of wildflowers and beneficiary mixes, in addition to the grazing ground, were key to the recent investment in a front-mounted Müthing MU-Pro 280 and a rear-mounted MU-M/S Plus 280.

"We always topped the grazing land after the cattle had moved on to promote new growth," explains Tim Hole, farm manager at the estate. "We'd previously used batwings, which gave us the speed to cover ground quickly, but left too much lengthy material on the surface, which stunted growth."

He adds that the Müthing range was recommended by an Oxfordshire contractor, who showed them that the



Mulcher units help keep grass yields up

ABOVE
Tim Hole and Neil Lewis explain that the Müthings can run at the same speed as the previous batwings

machines would provide the mulching effect they needed. The machines, imported by Simon Richard and supplied to the estate by Halse South West, arrived on the farm at the start of May.

"Each unit is 2.8m wide. We wanted to maximise the working width, so we didn't opt for the Pro model at the rear," Tim explains. "It gives us a theoretical working width of 5.6m, but we set the GPS to 5.2m to avoid any striping."

Tackling drought

The dry spring and summer meant grass yields were down across the country. Tim says they were able to mitigate this to some extent, thanks to two reservoirs on the farm, which are holdovers from when the estate grew potatoes. However, he says following the changeover to the Müthing mulchers, they got a much more even flush of grass after topping, with higher yields across the farm on average.

"I think our neighbours were confused about why we were cutting grass back when everyone was struggling for yield this year," he says. "But the mulching effect of the flails meant we were able to push our grass forward a bit more and maximise what we have."

Both units feature the DuraX M-hammers, mounted on the rotor, which cut and mulch the grass against a 'shark fin' chopping bar. Material can then be distributed ahead of the rear roller or pushed over the roller if field conditions are poor. One of the appealing factors was the build quality, which Tim says is second to none. "It is heavy-duty and we haven't had any issues with wearing parts so far, despite it covering a lot of ground."

"It isn't the easiest thing to adjust, and you need to make sure it is set up correctly

to get the best results. We were running the rear unit with the pressure too high at first, and it wouldn't follow the ground correctly, but once we knew the sweet spot, we had very few issues," he says.

Neil Lewis, who drives the Massey Ferguson 8S.265 the Müthings are mounted on, adds that they haven't lost any speed since switching to the mulchers. "The fields are the limiting factor. If the ground is smooth, then I'll happily sit at 7-8kph, sometimes as much as 10kph."

Extra versatility

The Müthing units haven't just been used on the grazing ground. Tim says they keep finding new jobs for them. Managing the SFI margins was an obvious task, with over 80ha of flower mixes cut back in line with the agreements since May.

"It has also helped with some weed management," Tim explains. "We had a grass field that was overrun with fat hen, and we were considering a full reseed. We put the Müthings in there and cut back the weeds, and the grass has been able to jump ahead and outcompete."

The rear unit also has a wide range of vertical movement. The angle of the cutting deck can be adjusted from 90deg upwards to 60deg downwards. "We haven't tried cutting hedges with it just yet, but we've been able to clean up some of the ditches and riverbanks that hadn't been touched in years," Tim says.

He concludes that the Müthings are part of a complete toolkit to manage the farm. "We haven't sold on the batwings, because these can go on any tractor, with any operator, to clear a few hectares. But we've seen a real benefit to switching to mulching for our grassland." 🌱

BELOW
The mulching effect has helped keep grassland growing despite the dry weather, as well as clearing up environmental areas



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