

Gehl Windrow Merger Offers Efficiency

WEST BEND, WI. — "In order to maintain a nice, thick crop mat and a uniform cut in third and fourth alfalfa cuttings, you used to have to increase your ground speed," says Paul Reilly, Gehl Project Engineer.

"During the later cuttings, the crop mat is smaller with each successive cut. Increasing travel speed not only uses more fuel and horsepower, but it also increases wear and tear on the tractor, forage harvester, forage box, running gear, and operator."

Reilly states that during the first cutting, farmers usually travel at a moderate speed of 3 to 5 mph. By the third or fourth cutting, some people accelerate to 8 to 10 mph just to keep enough material flowing into the harvester.

"For each mile an hour that you increase ground speed, you take horsepower away from your harvester," says Reilly. "With the windrow merger, the tractor horsepower can be used to chop rather than running up and down the field."

Because the forage harvester picks up a thicker crop mat with the windrow merger, you'll also

get a more uniform cut. That increases your cutting capacity, and your knives and cutterbar work more efficiently, too. Even though they're cutting the same amount of crop, it takes just half the actual number of cutting repetitions to finish the job.

How it works

The hydraulically driven windrow merger mounts on the front of your tractor. As you pass through the field, the unit picks up one windrow, and moves it over to the next windrow on a cross conveyor. The result is a single, thick, double windrow. With the windrow merger it takes half as many passes through the field, which reduces your fuel consumption, harvesting time, and helps preserve the crop's nutrient value.

"We came up with a standard list of kits for most of the major tractor manufacturers, and the others we handle on-demand," says Reilly. "We recommend mounting the windrow merger on tractors over 100-horsepower, simply for the chopping capacity."

"After I saw it at Farm Progress Days I was so intrigued I had to find one to test as soon as I got



Gehl's windrow merger mounts on the tractor front and picks up one windrow and moves it over to the next windrow on a cross conveyor as the tractor passes through the field.

home," says Dan Natzke, a dairy farmer from Greenleaf, Wisc.

"When we came back we tried to rent one. We ended up buying one instead. We've used it for one crop so far, and loved it. We're going to be able to make better quality hay, and fine-tune our hay-making operation.

"It's hard to put an actual dollar value on the importance of quality hay. You do anything you can to get the crop in on time, and that's where Gehl's windrow merger fits in."

Jay Fitzgerald, a dairy farmer from Newton, Wisc., realized a substantial savings in time and

fuel.

"I recorded the time I spent harvesting," says Fitzgerald. "Using the windrow merger, we harvested about 8 acres of alfalfa in an hour. We cut our harvesting time by up to 40 percent.

"We noticed a big drop in fuel consumption, too. I estimate we cut fuel consumption by at least 33 percent compared to the year before. We had plenty of power to operate the forage harvester at full capacity, and we weren't overworking the tractor."

"I would highly recommend the machine to others," says Natzke. "Fuel and time savings are obvious. And if you can operate your machine more efficiently and harvest your crop in half the number of passes, you're saving more than money. You're reducing soil compaction, too. Those are the things we have to look at in order to be efficient."

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