

Leading agricultural journalist and broadcaster IAN HARVEY looks behind the scenes at rural community issues and how farmers are meeting the challenge of developing the farm business and supporting the farm family

rural reality



■ MIGHTY MACHINE

Packaging haylage into small bags, at 'Rossglass Haylage Ltd', is achieved with a KME 'Trojan Baler', manufactured in England and the only one of its type in production in the province. FW-1J.

■ QUALITY COMPRESSION:

The KME packaging machine at 'Rossglass Haylage Ltd', is fed a supply of quality checked haylage which is shaken out, then compressed into small, easy-to-handle bags, for sale as horse feed. FW-1P

fate to aim for hay production, with our unpredictable climate, but haylage was the next most sensible plan.

"With that thought in mind we started to do the sums, finding a suitable baler on the internet.

"We went to look at one in Yorkshire, but it didn't compress the bales sufficiently well.

"The we went to Norfolk and met up with a farmer called Edward Howard, who was baling haylage in small bags and selling it successfully to customers as far away as Scotland and all over England.

"His EH Haylage brand had become established as a good quality horse fodder with high standards.

"He produces haylage from over two hundred acres of grass and his advice to us was very encouraging.

"At the same time we were put in touch with a company called KME which manufactures a baler, which we subsequently bought and which compresses the bales to just the right level.

"When we returned home we looked at other haylage options first, including the possibility of starting our own brand name for our home-produced haylage."

John remarked, "We were impressed with Edward Howard's attention to

health and safety, the cleanliness factor of the haylage and his quality control system.

"All in all, we made our minds up that there were definite market outlets and great potential for good quality, easy-to-manage bales of haylage.

"So we set up Rossglass Haylage Ltd., as a company, in January this year, based in my two large ex-potato storage sheds across the yard.

"In May the previous year we had sown Ryegrass with an eye to the future and in July that year Edward Howard came over to Castlewellan Show where we jointly exhibited a batch of his EH Haylage brand.

"The show was such a success sales-wise that Edward signed us up, without hesitation, as sole distributors for EH Haylage for the entire island of Ireland.

"When we had opened a bale, people were coming over to the stand saying they had been attracted by the beautiful, sweet-smell of the haylage.

Iain joined the conversation again, "It effectively sold itself!

The whole point of the quality factor is that when we break open a big bale of stored haylage, like the bale you saw me take from the stack before tea, we check that there is no sign of mould or dust.

"If there is any danger of that occurring we remove it from the conveyor immediately.

"So far we have had very little to have to remove, because we pay close attention to the time of cutting, its state at the time of baling and the bales are brought straight from the fields.

"By wrapping the big bales at the shed door, we minimise the damage done to the wraps, which ensures that the haylage is stored in mint condition with little risk of spoilage.

"Our attention to weed control is also vital as is, management of the grass swards.

"We produce two types of haylage, the 'Original', is cut earlier with higher energy and protein levels and is aimed at working and competition horses, including ponies, youngstock and breeding stock and for those that need to gain condition.

"EH Haylage High-Fibre, cut later, has a higher fibre content, with moderate protein and energy levels and is best suited for less active leisure horses and ponies, those at rest or convalescing and laminitis-prone horses and ponies.

"Fortunately I've had a lifetime's experience riding and handling horses so I understand the owner's needs."

■ BEAUTIFUL BRAIRD: Iain McMordie and John Gill examine the 'take' and growth of one of their winter barley crops, just across the road from their 'Rossglass Haylage Ltd' business, based on-farm, at Killough, County Down. FW-1A.



■ PARTNERS IN HAYLAGE:

Neighbouring farmers, John Gill and Iain McMordie, formed 'Rossglass Haylage Ltd', fully understanding the value of co-operation and combining skills and machinery. FW-1K.

Did you know?

■ The literal meaning of the Irish word 'druim' (drum) is a 'back'. In its local application it signifies a 'long low hill', or 'ridge'. It is, says PW Joyce in 'Irish Names of Places', 1898 edition, one of the most common of all root words in Irish names. Its most anglicised forms are 'Drum, Drom' and 'Drim'.

■ These syllables begin about 2,400 names of townlands, towns and villages. There are also countless names that contain this very prolific root otherwise combined. In Munster it is very generally pronounced 'droum' and in many names it is modernised accordingly.

■ There are several places in the southern and western counties called 'Dromada' and 'Dromadda', meaning the 'long ridge'. In some northern counties the 'f' of 'Druim-fhada' is retained and the name becomes 'Drumfad'. Often the 'd' sound is lost by aspiration. 'Aughrim' in Galway, the scene of a battle in 1691, is translated as 'horse-hill'.

■ Sometimes the 'd' is changed to that of 't', as in 'Leitrim', 'grey ridge', the county name and of more than 40 townlands scattered throughout Ireland. Finally, the diminutive 'Druimin (Drimeen), has given names to various places now called 'Drimeen, Dromeen' and 'Drumeen'. 'Dromainn' (drumin), which is perhaps a diminutive, also means a 'ridge', much the same as 'druim' itself.

Useful contacts

- Rural Development Council 028 8676 6980
- Rural Community Network 028 8676 6670
- Rural Support Line 0845 606 7607
- Family farm Development Ltd 028 8076 1719
- DARD Grants and Subsidies Division 028 7131 9900
- Post Office Customer Helpline 08457 223344
- Health Action Zone 028 8772 9017
- Farming Families Bureau 028 7930 1003



Supporting Dairy Farming in Northern Ireland

