

Dynamite design

Farmers know a good design when they see one, and so did Hustler when it spotted Taranaki engineer Michael Bloeman's balefeeder at the Fieldays inventions stand in 1997

Words and images by Terry Stevenson



Hustler bought and developed Michael's chainless idea, then patented the design and after a number of modifications, has sold more than 4000 units in New Zealand and around the world. If that's not a Kiwi success story and a tribute to the Fieldays invention competition, what is?

First launched in 1999, the Hustler Chainless 4000 Balefeeder, which I saw working on the Tainui Group Holdings Ltd dry stock farm at Tauhei, is the current series four version.

Hangawera Station farm manager Ian Mathieson has used other balefeeders, which he says weren't up to grade. Now on their third generation Hustler balefeeder, he knows what to look for.

A key feature of the Chainless 4000 trailed balefeeder is the lack of chains to rotate the bale, which typically have high wear rates and require considerable maintenance. Hustler also provides the advantage of a pair of carefully designed self-cleaning twin-variablespeed rotors. The lower rotor turns a third of the speed of the top rotor and out in the paddock I could easily see how well it rotated the bale and fluffed up the feed then laid it down evenly, increasing its quality for the stock.

Performance and handling

From Mathieson's point of view, stability is king. During winter, supplement is fed out along the ridges where there's little space to turn, yet he finds it's less of a problem with the Hustler Chainless 4000 Balefeeder because of its extra wide 2.1m wheel track.

Thanks to the good design both square and round bales are used on Hangawera Station without hassle or changing anything.

"I've trialled two other brands and found they didn't very easily feed-out both square and round bales," recalls Mathieson.

The Chainless 4000 Balefeeder requires a 12 to 60L/min hydraulic (double acting) flow rate to operate the rear loading arm. For safety reasons the hydraulics are routed

through a diverting valve in such a way that you only need two remotes to independently run either the self loader, the platform or feeding drums.

The loading arm is unique in that the bale is securely spiked by the rear tynes and then turned through 180° before coming to rest at a point just above the main platform. The driver watches a scale at the front of the Hustler where he can set the auto-latch point to hold the bale at his preferred height so they can easily remove the bale wrapping. The bale is then gently lowered onto the platform. The loading arm becomes ready to spike the next bale allowing you to take two bales



The balefeeder's rotors

Hustler says...

We have a range of six different feeders so we can recommend the correct feeder to suit the farmer's application, whether it's feeding into a trough, feeding round or square bales, hay or silage. A small dairy farmer will have a three-point linkage machine whereas a larger dairy farmer will have a trailed Hustler," the Hustler Upper North Island representative says.

"Balefeeders are our core business and where all our focus is. The Hustler chainless concept has been around for a long time and it has stood the test of time – it is absolutely bullet-proof! Hustler balefeeders have a two-year warranty but why Hustler has been so successful is its reliability. It's the Rolls Royce of balefeeders!"

Ask Jaiden
If you have any questions regarding balefeeders or other machines, write to askjaiden@tradergroup.co.nz and check out the Ask Jaiden column, page 16.

Specifications Hustler balefeeders							
3 PTL model	Capacity	Feed chains	Floor	Loading height	Weight	Feeding components	Hydraulics required
Chainless 2000	1 bale	Unique ChainlessTM	Fully enclosed non corroding HDPE	330mm	490kg	Twin 220mm patented rotors	2 double acting remotes
SL-350	1 bale	Twin 12000lb zinc plated	Fully enclosed non corroding HDPE	280mm	460kg	40x40 RHS zinc plated	1 double acting remotes
SL-450T	1 bale	Twin 12000lb zinc plated	Fully enclosed non corroding HDPE	280mm	640kg	40x40 RHS zinc plated	2 double acting remotes
System 10	1 bale	N/A	N/A	N/A	150kg	400mm spikes	1 double acting remotes
Trailled model	Capacity	Feed chains	Floor	Loading system	Weight	Feeding components	Hydraulics required
Chainless 4000	2 bale	Unique ChainlessTM	Fully enclosed non corroding HDPE	Unique total controlTM	950kg	Twin 220mm patented rotors	2 double acting remotes
Chainless 8000	4 bale	Unique ChainlessTM	Fully enclosed non corroding HDPE	Loader/tractor	2500kg	Twin 220mm patented rotors	2 double acting remotes
SL-700	2 bale	Twin 12000lb zinc plated	Fully enclosed non corroding HDPE	Unique total controlTM	880kg	40x40 RHS zinc plated	2 double acting remotes

into the paddock, with one in the breach ready to go.

Because of this system I saw no banging and crashing, which is why, after thousands of hours, the Hustler is still going as good as new.

Mathieson says a key feature of the Hustler is its ability to hold the bale at any point in order to unwrap it or take the net off.

"The thing about piercing the bale is that you don't always have to be accurate, it will always work, and it will never roll off on the hills."

Weighing 950kg, the implement can safely carry twice its own weight around hills!

The bales didn't roll around the cradle when Mathieson was driving around the hills because it was wedged against the rotors, and the spare bale was just as secure during transport.

With so many stock units, feeding out is a big task, compounded by the fact the cattle are broken up into small lots. Many would say a silage pit and a feedout wagon would best serve Hangawera Station, however the reality is that Mathieson knows exactly how many bales to feed out

to each group, and he sizes those groups to suit the required bales. Perhaps the biggest advantage gained from using a balefeeder strong enough to carry a pair of up to 1000kg oversize ("twelves") round silage bales is that Mathieson is able to put more stock in each paddock. This is because he can deliver a couple of small bales worth of additional silage into each paddock. In turn, the extra feed per oversize bale has allowed more stock to be carried in each paddock, in the Hereford bulls case, from 45 to 55.

"It means we've gradually lifted our mob sizes to suit the bigger bales, which then has created a higher stocking rate. And the gear handles it," Mathieson says.

Hangawera Station gets very dry in summer and extremely wet in winter, making it slippery going around the hills when feeding out. The clay-base soil also means a heavy silage wagon would get stuck, so overall the Hustler Chainless 4000 Balefeeder has proved to be not only the most reliable feeder, but also the best all-round option for what they do. After more than 6000 silage and hay bales spread over

four seasons their Hustler is still going well.

"For a machine which has fed out that amount of bales, it's a very low maintenance machine," Mathieson says.

He has replaced one hydraulic hose which had pin holes and a row of plastic wear plates on the platform.

Mathieson says he wouldn't buy any other type of feeder.

"I like its safety features on the hills, the width of the balefeeder, the loading capability and on the hills I can hold the bale from moving around on the platform, which I have to."

FARM TRADER
says

The Hustler Chainless 4000 Balefeeder is a Kiwi success. Its low-maintenance design means farmers can feedout all winter without any downtime.



A key feature of the Hustler is its ability to hold the bale at any point

Van Mathieson with the Chainless 4000 Balefeeder



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Hangawera Station

At 700ha, Hangawera Station is the largest dry stock station in the Waikato. The rolling hill to steep country farm carries around 3300 sheep and up to 16 stock units per hectare.

Having many small stock lots is relevant to their feed out system, and the Hustler they use.

A noticeably quiet running three-year old Same Iron 130 tractor hauls the Chainless 4000 around the large farm, and

is used to cart and stack the 1250 oversize round silage bales and 300 square hay bales each year. ■

We like...

- No chains means less wear
- Self-cleaning twin-varispeed rotors
- Wide 2.1m wheel track for stability
- Easily feeds-out square and round bales.
- Bale wrapping easily removed
- Carries two bales

We didn't like...

- Nothing. The Hustler is perfect for this operation



The balefeeder's chassis and platform