



“ The farm already had a few tractors running BKT tyres and I had only heard good things. ”

Applied innovation

A unique approach

Tyres are always more than they appear, acting detrimentally to soil health or, when the correct wheels, tyres and pressures are used, in a way that can minimise compaction, improve operations and cut costs. CPM speaks to a farm manager who’s optimised tyre selection.

By Melanie Jenkins

Prioritising both tyre and wheel suitability for the machine, the job at hand and on-farm challenges is all part of Leopold Stolberg’s tactics to minimise soil compaction and manage blackgrass, something he has done by closely working with Brocks Wheel and Tyre (BWT).

Family owned Eaubrink Farms (GmbH) is located just west of Kings Lynn in Norfolk, and consists of just under 4500ha of diverse crops, including sugar beet, winter and spring barley, beans and winter wheat. Farm manager Leopold, has a robust background in agricultural business management, having completed his farming apprenticeship

and an agricultural business management school in Germany. After starting as a farm worker in 2014, he’s since progressed to the management role and has worked closely with BWT to make improvements on the farm by seeking advice on fitting the correct wheels and tyres on the farm’s machines.

Heavy soils

One of the most significant challenges faced by Eaubrink Farms is the heavy clay and loamy soil, which causes compaction issues and complicates crop management. “Compaction is an issue, but the big enemy is blackgrass, so everything we do is based on our fight against it.”

This means Leopold operates a conventional system with a focus on spring cropping, relatively intense cultivations and lots of stale seedbeds to achieve as much control over weeds as possible. “We don’t run controlled traffic farming (CTF) because it’s too complicated with too many people involved, and we can’t run 12m cultivators on our soils – it’s impossible,” he explains.

However, to mitigate these issues a hybrid-type tramline system has been developed on Eaubrink Farms to ensure that compaction occurs consistently in designated areas, thereby minimising the impact of traffic. “We use RTK Autosteer to make sure that tramlines are in the same place every year, meaning that compaction is only occurring in this assigned area. It means that if we do subsoil the tramline we don’t have to worry about knowing where it was because



Operating an unusual track width as well as trying to minimise compaction led farm manager, Leopold Stolberg to working with BWT to fit more BKT tyres across the farm’s machines.

the system will have it recorded. This also makes operations easier when we follow up with ploughing or cultivations.

“We’ve got a good range of different machines to utilise on farm and every year we manage fields differently, depending on what each block of land requires,” says Leopold. “Obviously we have to work with the weather and sometimes we have to wait for a rain event to achieve the right soil structure and to get seedbeds ready. This is the only way to work with the types of soil we have on farm and there are only a few days where the timing is just right, and soil is in the ideal condition to work on.”

One of Leopold’s favourite machines is

Farm facts

Eaubrink Farm GmbH, Kings Lynn, Norfolk

- Farm arable area: 4480ha
- Soil type: Heavy clay loams
- Tractors: John Deere 2 x 6250R; 1 x 8370R; 1 x 8RX410; 2 x 9RX620; 1 x 612R Fendt 2 x 936 Vario; 1 x 930 Vario; 1 x 933 Vario; 1 x 939 Vario; 1 x 1050 Vario
- Telehandlers: 3 x JCB
- Combines: John Deere 3 x X9
- Cultivation equipment: Horsch Tiger AS 6m; Väderstad Opus 6m; Väderstad Carrier with CrossCutter disc; 1 x Väderstad Rexius Twin 830; Keeble Progressive; 2 x Köckerling Vario; 3 x Lemken power harrows; 2 x 9 furrow Lemken ploughs, 1 x 6 furrow Lemken plough; 1 x 5 furrow Lemken plough



A John Deere 8R tractor was fitted with wider BKT 900mm rear wheels with BKT 710mm front wheels to support the heavy front axle, thereby decreasing compaction and increasing traction.

the Köckerling Vario cultivator. “We have two of these because they’re so versatile and really well built. We don’t bale any of our straw anymore because we don’t want contractor wheelings all over the fields and to help prevent compaction, but using the Vario allows us to mix the straw while doing shallow cultivations to get the blackgrass and volunteers to chit,” he explains. “We then often do a second pass with the Vario a bit later and deeper to start creating the base for good seed beds through loosening, mixing and mechanical weedkilling.”

However, having a wide range of both tractors and cultivators to help minimise compaction and manage blackgrass can only go so far if the wheels and tyres aren’t suitable to the track width system that’s in place. This led Leopold to working with BWT to fit more BKT tyres across the

farm’s machines. “The farm already had a few tractors running BKT tyres and I had only heard good things,” he notes.

Understanding the specific requirements of Eaubrink Farms, BWT advised and supplied wheel solutions that included BKT tyres with VF (Very High Flexion) technology, significantly reducing soil compaction. For example, for a John Deere 8R tractor on the farm, BWT supplied wider BKT Agrimax V-Flecto 900mm rear wheels with BKT 710mm front wheels to support the heavy front axle, thereby decreasing compaction and increasing traction. “With VF Technology, you can go to much lower pressures without damaging the tyres, which was a massive improvement. This technology is especially helpful for cultivations and trailer work as this is a big part of our operations,” explains Leopold.

The previous tyre set up on the 8R involved using 650 front tyres but BWT has now set them up with BKT Agrimax Force 710 tyres which work better, and the pressure data has improved, plus it’s cost the farm less than other premium brands might, explains the firm’s Will Brock. “And the tyres we fitted to this tractor are in a size that not all other brands produce, so using BKT tyres allowed the farm to fit exactly the size required.”

BWT positions itself as aiming to fit the right wheels onto the right tractor, he says. “We often get calls asking for wider, narrower tyres or tyres capable of working at lower pressures, rather than just replacing tyres like-for-like or based on price.”

To do this, BWT assesses technical tractor data to match up a product with customer requirements such as working widths and tyre pressure information from the field. “The price is just one aspect of tyre and wheel selection and it’s not the most important one,” says Will. “Instead, the focus is on solutions that will be time saving, performance driven and able to aid yield because these elements all outweigh the upfront cost of a tyre and can also be more valuable than how long it lasts.”

With this in mind, BWT helped Leopold convert one of his John Deere 6250R tractors to run on dual wheels with BKT Spargo VF tyres to avoid drilling into the tyre tracks. “Because we run on 2.25m track spacings, it’s not as straightforward as standard track spacings, but it’s worked out really well and so far we’ve haven’t come across a tyre sizing that we can’t get with BKT,” says Leopold.

Will points out that the track widths at



Blackgrass is one of the biggest challenges at Eaubrink Farms and most management decisions are made based on the fight against it.



According to BWT's Will Brock, price is just one aspect of tyre and wheel selection and it's not the most important one.

► Eaubrink Farm is unlike what most other farmers are likely to be working with. In order to provide the correct widths for the row crops on the farm, Will helped fit 2m, 2.25m and 3m specialist wheels. "Eaubrink Farm is quite unique, not just in its scale – which brings its own set of requirements – but it also has a different track width system in place. It's not quite CTF but is a hybrid set up consisting of wider track widths, so that more machines can run in the wheelings. The missing link to optimise this system was the expertise required to get the correct wheels and tyres that would allow this set up to work as well as possible – it wasn't something that was an 'off the shelf' solution."

Two of the farm's Fendt tractors have Fendt's integrated tyre pressure regulation system, VarioGrip, which is designed to quickly adapt tyre pressure from 8.7-36.3psi, including while the tractor is being driven. "These tractors have been fitted with BKT tyres, and when the VarioGrip works, it's a brilliant system," says Leopold. "However, it must be used frequently to keep it going. But it does make things easier on the tractors which it's on. On other tractors which are doing field work we have sets of dual wheels that we run on low pressures because these rarely go on roads and when they don't travel fast, so we don't have to alter the pressure."

Leopold emphasises the value for money offered by BKT tyres: "I just can't see what justifies double the price for a premium tyre on a trailer. The quality of BKT Ridemax tyres is very good, and for what we do, we're very happy with what we have installed on all our grain trailers. These triple axle trailers came fitted with



The farm's triple axle trailers came fitted with another brand of tyre but now run on BKT tyres.

another tyre brand but we've now started running them on BKTs and want to move most of our trailers to BKT tyres."

Sweet spot

When weighing up price over premium product, Will suggests that there's a value proposition sweet spot to achieve the technical performance required versus potential tyre lifespan. "Think of it this way, you might be getting 80% of the lifespan, but it's cost you 60% of the price. And what we've really noticed is that the incidence of warranty claims with BKT have been minimal and the firm does produce reliable tyres."

He advises farmers to take the technical data into account and to not just stick with a brand because it's what the tractor has always run on. "One example of assessing technical data is when people look at the highest load rating of a tyre but don't necessarily realise that this is the weight it'll carry at operational pressure. But there are charts for this, as well as data on hill performance, road speed, dual wheels and more besides. All of this can be evaluated to help improve performance on farm and for specific uses that the tyres might be required for."

At Eaubrink Farms, using BKT tyres in accordance with BWT's suggestions, has not only improved productivity but also contributed to sustainability through reduction of fuel consumption and increased crop yields through optimised tyre pressure management, says Will. "The pressure characteristics are pretty much identical between all makes, so those intangible benefits are the same regardless of make. In this regard, BKT is right up with any other manufacturer."

Overall, Eaubrink Farms' experience with BKT tyres shows how the right wheel and tyre combination can address the unique challenges faced by modern farmers, he adds. "The customised approach of BWT's advice, along with the cost-

effectiveness and high quality of BKT tyres has enabled Eaubrink Farms to enhance its operational efficiency and sustainability. This emphasises the importance of the correct solutions in agriculture, ensuring that farms can overcome challenges and thrive in a competitive environment." ■

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Whether farmers are in the agricultural, industrial or OTR industry, BKT tyres are designed to help machinery perform at its best, even on the toughest terrains. Find the ideal tyre today by browsing BKT's wide range of tyres, or filter the search by industry, application or features.

BWT is passionate about getting wheel technology right. While the gains are often not tangible with a hard monetary value, the savings and benefits associated with minimising fuel usage, tyre wear and compaction along with the gains from yield increase, time saving and tyre safety are critical when margin is under pressure.

BWT's relationship with BKT has been invaluable in its product development where BWT has worked together to introduce new sizes to the market such as the 420/80R50 tyre which is very popular on root crop farms or as a general-purpose narrow tyre. BKT's product development is rapid which is great in a changing market, making them a go-to brand for all farmers' requirements.

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