

QMA Impact Report

Farm	Green Heart Dairy/ Don and Chris Hillreigel	
Planner	April Wright Lucas & Ben Hepler	QMA Code: PFM
Date	10/14/2020	

Results / Impact

(briefly describe the progress toward QMA goals as well as any increased production or profitability, improved efficiency, improved effectiveness of BMP, etc.)

Helping A Small Farm Make Decisions to Improve Forage Quality and Labor Efficiency.

From the start of his participation with the Precision Feed Management Program, Don Hillreigel has struggled to get his first cutting of grass hay harvested early enough to produce a high quality dairy feed. A major goal for the farm is to improve the quality and quantity of the forages available to feed his dairy herd. All farmers know that time is of the essence when harvesting grass hay, as the 'window of opportunity' to capture its optimal nutritional value is only one week in duration. While the baleage (round bale silage) production system best fits Don's limited labor force, the time and effort required to feed those bales has proven to be a barrier to getting to accomplishing his fieldwork in a timely manner.

In conversations with his WAP Nutrient and Precision Feed Management Planners, Don shared his frustrations regarding the excess time and strenuous physical labor required to feed baleage to his herd. Planners April Wright Lucas and Ben Hepler assisted Don with problem solving and the identification of potential solutions. Ben knew of an automated round bale feeder in use on another dairy farm in the PFM Program, and made arrangements for a 'test drive' at Green Heart Dairy for a day. This trial ensured that the machine could be used successfully on the farm, thus reducing the risk associated with its purchase.



After Don spent some time using the automated bale feeder, and examining other options available to him, he decided to purchase a smaller sized model that was better suited to his barn's physical structure and the size of his round bales. In a recent conversation with Don, he stated that, "Having this machine has cut my baleage feeding time in half, and has enabled me to feed more forage per feeding. It is like night and day!" With the support from his NM/PFM team to solve a significant problem, Don has taken control of a time management issue, and created the opportunity for a timely harvest of his first cutting hay. This change allows him to meet his goals of a timelier haycrop harvest and improved profits, along with the goals of the PFM program. And it improves his quality of life!