

## Contracting Partnerships

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When you employ a contractor you are likely to be giving them responsibility for a vital part of your agricultural operation. When taking on a silaging contractor, they are responsible for your farm's next winter rations, therefore it is vital that you choose a professional to get the job done properly.



Lincolnshire contractor, Tim Russon knows this only too well. After 27 years in the business and the son of a dairy farmer, Tim cuts nearly 4,900 ha of silage each year, of which approximately 2,000 ha feed livestock and 3,000 ha feed anaerobic digester plants. Both operations require professionalism and planning and he tries to speak to all his customers prior to the season to make sure he is up to speed on their farm layout, the nutritional requirements of the livestock and their grass leys. Only then can he put in place his 'masterplan' to try and ensure that he can get to everyone when promised and provide a high quality of service.

Good communication is vital and running two silage teams, alongside a wide range of other contracting operations, has put Tim in a management role. However, while he may no longer be 'hands-on', he does personally visit and manage each site to check that customers are happy, there are no problems and that the job is completed to the high professional standard he demands of his workforce.



Tim has a background in livestock feeding and his customers have confidence in his knowledge, often leaving him to make decisions on chop length to secure the highest possible nutritional value of the finished feed, based on cutting conditions on the day. However, communication lines are always open if customers have specific requirements for their crop. His team is well equipped and drivers are all trained to ensure they get the most out of their machines. This also avoids unnecessary breakdowns and problems and keeps the season running to schedule, weather permitting.

However, the partnership cannot be one-sided and Tim is keen to emphasise the importance of customers being prepared for their contractor's arrival. "The clamp needs to be empty, clean and ready to fill, with the yard and necessary gateways accessible to the team," he said.

"Sheeting needs to be ready for use. Our time can then be spent focusing on the job in hand to ensure that we can work safely and efficiently. I always request a site plan from new customers so that I can see any hazards we need to be aware of, such as power lines or footpaths."

All Tim then requests from his clients is a degree of flexibility to allow him to get the job done efficiently and effectively, despite the perils of the UK weather.



Like any good business partnership, price should always be agreed before the job is started, with supply of string, wrap and sheeting clearly planned in advance. Likewise, payment terms must be settled.

In summary, it is important when selecting a contractor that you do your research and form a partnership that works for both sides enabling the work to be completed on time and to the highest possible standard.

### **What to look for in a contractor:**

- ⇒ Check your contractor has appropriate insurance for the specific operation (a mistake on a high value crop could be catastrophic)
- ⇒ Discuss and agree pricing before the job starts and agree payment terms
- ⇒ Membership of the (NAAC) is an easy way to make sure your contractor is insured and has access to on-going training and industry updates
- ⇒ Check for necessary training and qualifications
- ⇒ Ensure your contractor has done all necessary health and safety analysis
- ⇒ Look for the NAAC's Assured Land-Based Contractor Scheme accreditation (ALBC) for independent verification of the contractor and their operational procedures

### **What your contractor needs from you:**

- ⇒ Full information on safety issues and hazards on the farm (eg overhead power lines, hidden obstacles, dangerous terrain, whether children have access to work areas)
- ⇒ Information about the farm such as biosecurity requirements or any farm assurance requirements
- ⇒ Nutritional specifications unless the contractor is given responsibility
- ⇒ Agreement on waste disposal of packaging, such as spare wrap

For more information please contact NAAC, tel: 01780 784631 or [www.naac.co.uk](http://www.naac.co.uk)

More information on making silage can be found in the BRP manual [Making grass silage for Better Returns](#)