

How did this farmer eliminate tractors from his indoor feedlot?

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David Barban farms sheep in the French Alps. During winter, his ewes are housed indoor and David invested in a **Hustler** stationary Chainless bale feeder SX105 to unwind his bales into feed conveyors, making him able to do the job all by himself quickly and efficiently.

David started sheep farming in the French Alps about 15 years ago with two business partners. Due to the harsh winter conditions in the mountains, the livestock is housed indoor during the lambing season and the coldest months.

We visited David's farm a few days before Christmas last year. The main sheep barn is only six years old, with French classic wooden support columns and the space is divided in several rows by three feed conveyors.

Using feed conveyors allows David to save space while providing the six groups with the perfect amount of feed they need according to their profile: ewes with lamb at foot, pregnant ewes, hogget replacements, etc.

A few years ago, David lost both business partners and had to cut back on the amount of sheep he owned, from 1,000 ewes to only 650 ewes. He also changed his feeding routine. "Working by myself, I decided to feed out mainly baleage to save time and money," David said.

"When I started feeding out baleage, I didn't have a bale feeder. I was feeding out by hand. I did that the first winter, and realised we had to find another solution!"

When David started to look for a bale feeder he could use to feed his conveyors, he didn't realise how hard it would be to find a machine that would suit him. He tried a lot of chain bale feeders, but he found that "they chopped the hay too much" or "they would cause jamming on the conveyor," David sighed.

One day, David came across an article from an agricultural magazine that talked about Hustler Chainless bale feeders and got in touch with a Hustler accredited dealer, Agrivert.

"They came with two bale feeders on their truck to run a demo at my farm and I liked the chainless concept right away."

Hustler designs different types of chainless bale feeders: mounted Chainless bale feeders, trailed Chainless bale feeders and stationary Chainless bale feeders, the latter being mainly used as a re-baler. Hustler

accredited dealer Agrivert presented a mounted type and a stationary type which would both work well for the job.

"The way this chainless bale feeder was working, I figured that's what I needed."

David chose a the Hustler stationary Chainless bale feeder XR1500 (now named Chainless SX105), mounted on optional wheels, and which is powered by an independent hydraulic unit running on electricity.

David feeds out his sheep twice a day and is able to do the job by himself, although he often gets some help from young boys doing their apprenticeship at the farm. David owns a tractor for general purpose around the farm and hay making operations, but he uses a small compact loader (easier to manoeuvre) to load the bale onto the bale feeder. Once it's done, he starts the feeding out, pushing the loaded bale feeder along to his three feed conveyors.

"The design is simple and efficient, it's very easy to maintain."

Even though David decided to use an independent hydraulic unit to run his bale feeder, he knows "that if one day he runs out of power, all he has to do is back up a tractor that has hydraulic outlets and he can run the bale feeder anyway. It can seem obvious, but it's something to take into account, especially farming in the mountains," concluded David.

The Chainless SX105 bale feeder in a nutshell

- Ideal for rebaling operations and stationary feeding out
- No troublesome chains and quieter machine
- Handles round and square bales
- Easy to use and to maintain
- Large and stable leg pads, can be mounted on optional wheels

Source: Hustler Equipment