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FEED OUT FEATURE

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# THE REAL DEAL

HUSTLER'S **KIWI-MADE** BALE FEEDER



NEW



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XXXXX - XXXXXX 2016 Issue 228 \$6.50 incl. GST



# The real deal

One of the main reasons I love this job is that I get to test Kiwi-made gear that is so impressive, the manufacturers and designers have found solutions to problems that most people didn't even know were problems.

Words and images by Jaiden Drought



Even with the hydraulic flow of a 30-year-old tractor, the SL360X turns heavy early silage bales with ease



**W**e rave on about how well-made European gear is (and it is) but when it comes to no nonsense solutions for Kiwi farmers you'd be hard-pressed to find better than New Zealand-made.

This brings me to yet another product reveal from Hawke's Bay manufacturer Hustler, and if you've seen its marketing campaigns of late you'll know the company has been gearing up to let 'something out of the bag'. I can categorically tell you, it is not a cat, but instead an impressive new round bale feeder – the SL360X. The Hustler slogan – 'Rethinking the Everyday' – is a perfect fit for this machine as feeding-out can be like Groundhog Day but this machine is designed to make it that much easier.

The all new SL360X replaces the SL350 and after testing it I believe it's the best round bale feeder on the market. There are a number of features which allow this to be the case but as a result, it will not be the cheapest. However, with one of these bad boys, you'll never again smash the back window of the tractor when opening it to pull a cord. This Hustler SL360X absolutely fits with my motto: Quality remains long after the price is forgotten.

## Key changes

The most significant change for me is the 'Snaplox' system

**“Uneven ground doesn't affect it as the feet will still push up enough to unlatch.”**

which is the hands-free auto-connect/disconnect loading system. This will save a bit of time but the best bit is it eliminates the need to open the back window or have a rope that drags on the mucky race which you then have to pull back in the cab. This system works very well as it has dual latches (on each end) and with a high mounting point on both sides of the feeder, this takes the load of the cradle and removes any load from the bale spears. How it works is that the feet slide up when the cradle touches the ground which pushes the rod up to lift the latches off the catch. The exact opposite happens when it is lifted to lock in place. Uneven ground doesn't affect it as the feet will still push up enough to unlatch. The rod which pushes up the catches is a tricky little number which goes both up and down and forward and back which means it can't be

Compare machinery specs at  NEW FARM MACHINERY**Hustler SL360X bale feeder**

<b>Bale size round:</b>	4' X 4' – 6' X 5'
<b>Bale size square:</b>	requires optional side bars
<b>Bale weight:</b>	up to 1250kg
<b>Unit weight:</b>	500kg
<b>Capacity:</b>	1 bale
<b>Hydraulics required:</b>	1 X double-acting, 30-60 litres/min, 2250-3000 psi
<b>Loading:</b>	Self-loading
<b>Size (LxWxH):</b>	2090 x 2048 x 1043mm



Even feeding right until the end of hard cores



Need new feed-out gear? There are currently over 200 feed-out machines for sale right now at [farmtrader.co.nz](http://farmtrader.co.nz)

“With just four grease nipples in total on the new SL360X there is no real case for a lack of maintenance.”



Hitching on uneven ground is no drama thanks to uneven length tines

falsely tripped if you hit a bump while transporting the feeder around the races and paddock.

Another key change with this new model is the floor of the feeder. Made from Thermoform polyethylene (plastic), it cleverly wraps around the floor and extends over the drive-shaft on each side. This has many benefits including the fact it completely covers the shafts which eliminates wrapping; it won't rust or break down under New Zealand's harsh climate, it offers 30 percent less drag compared to steel which makes it nice and slippery – perfect for feeding sticky silage or wet heavy bales, plus it is shock resistant, so really all the damage you could do is to pierce it with your loader forks.

The new feeder is also equipped with two 12,000lb roller chains. With the heavy-duty rollers and pins and the greater surface on each roller pin, this will no doubt increase



The guard around the hydraulic motor ensures the back wheel will never rip it off

chain life because they can't stretch or snake causing them to jump off.

With the new machine, bales are teased out with 40mm box section galvanised bars. Bars are bolted to the chain, making them both stronger and easier to replace. For different bale types blank bars or bars with more aggressive teeth are available, simply unbolt the old and whack the new ones on

without having to break the chain. Chain tensioners also allow you to adjust should the need arise.

With just four grease nipples in total on the new SL360X there is no real case for a lack of maintenance. And don't think they need daily greasing either, as long lasting fully sealed block bearings instead of bushes, they self-align with the shaft



The trick mechanism that allows the feet to lock and unlock the cradle



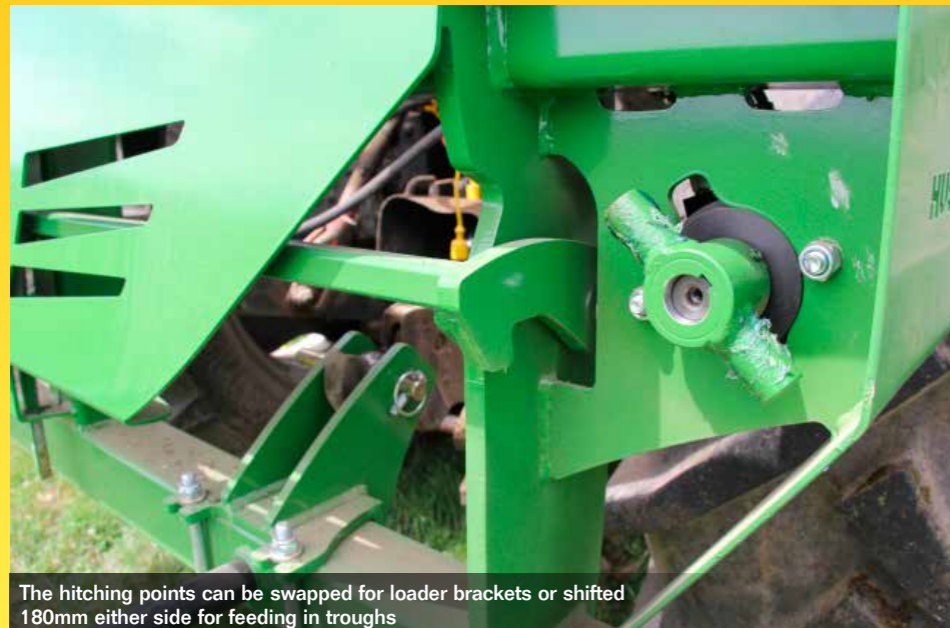
The guide cones allow easy hitching



Hydraulic motor drive



The drive on the cradle is the same at each end



The hitching points can be swapped for loader brackets or shifted 180mm either side for feeding in troughs



Drive bearing covers



The thermoform polyethylene floor completely covers the shafts on each side to eliminate wrapping and reduces drag over steel by 30%

requiring less grease and will outlast a bush. Proof of this is the fact that for every 1000 bale feeders Hustler has sold in the past, they have only sent out 2.7 replacement bearings. These bearings are mounted outside of the feeding cradle to keep them clean and away from pesky net wrap. Bearing covers have been added mainly to keep mud and muck out from the tractor wheels as much as anything.

Connecting the new bale feeder from either end is a huge bonus and provides a lot of flexibility when working on uneven ground, eliminating the need to drive back and

“**Connecting the new bale feeder from either end is a huge bonus.**”

forward over the same patch of often wet ground in the winter - reducing compaction is a big deal. In terms of feeding out another big benefit is that you can switch the direction the bale is being unrolled, which is key when feeding tight bales down a fence line or into a feed barn or pad.

Overall strength has been added to this machine but not simply by adding more steel. The SL360X is only eight percent heavier than its predecessor, but 30 percent stronger, and now has the power and strength to turn 1250kg bales.

### More impressive features

As well as all the clever changes made to this machine, it's also worth mentioning other significant features which contribute to Hustler's reputation for manufacturing tough machinery.

Firstly, the mounts are bolted to the headstock which means you can either mount loader or telehandler brackets for feeding into barns or troughs. Alternatively, you can shift the linkage mounts 180mm either side to allow more accurate feeding into feedpad bins without wastage.

Secondly, the six-tooth drive sprockets are made from Bisalloy (the same material used in a bulldozer blades) so they practically last forever. By using smaller diameter sprockets, less torque is required to drive the chains, allowing a smaller motor more power to turn even the toughest bales. The drive coupling is protected from hay jamming the drive connection during coupling and uncoupling while the drive motor is also protected from the rear tractor wheel on those pesky short linkage arms.

Next are the forged bale spears which allow loading of the feeder with the rear

linkage as they will comfortably pierce the bale. The two tines are unequal lengths which makes lining up particularly on uneven ground a straightforward task. Hustler has also developed their own conus insert into the main headstock which allows the same pressure on the tine from the front of the headstock to the nut at the back. Have you ever noticed your high tensile tines break in the same place all the time? The reason is that there is a point where the tine is unsupported and the pressure becomes too great and it will eventually snap.



- No need for ropes to latch and unlatch the cradle
- Heavy duty 12,000lb roller chain
- Thermoform polyethylene floor reduces drag by 30% over steel meaning those difficult bales are easier to turn
- Shafts are completely covered to eliminate feed wrapping around them
- Bearings are mounted outside the cradle and are covered
- Drive motor is well protected from a collision with the rear wheel
- Uneven forged tines allow you to stab the bale to load with the rear linkage and make it very easy to line up the cradle on an even ground
- Mounting points are bolted onto the headstock, can be moved 180mm either way for feeding into troughs or removed and loader brackets can be fitted
- Front and rear gates are available to contain material allowing maize or fodder beet to be fed through the bale feeder.
- Can hitch and feed from either end



- A hole or slot in the guide cover to oil the roller chain would be a handy addition to ensure longevity



The low cradle and conus tines allow bales to be loaded with the rear linkage

Finally another key feature worth mentioning is the low cradle design with removable front and rear gates allowing the operator to load with the rear linkage and will stop material falling out while in transport. It also allows material such as maize or fodder beet to be loaded and fed as the cradle is enclosed. The front gate is an optional extra as is a square bale kit which will feed up to six foot long bales.

## Verdict

The SL360X was a very impressive machine due to the high level of ingenuity and the fact Hustler has taken time to listen to its customers and extensively test the machine before presenting it to the market – all in all it has come up a real doosy. If you are in the market for a bale feeder, you'd be silly not to check this one out. ■

