TEST: BUCKTON SL7500

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Looking for a simple solution to enable slurry to be spread further on his property, Te Awamutu farmer Peter Holmes decided the Buckton SL7500 ticked all the boxes

Being a locally made piece of machinery, Buckton design their machines for use on New Zealand farms, with what New Zealand farmers want; in this case a good initial purchase price, a well-made implement offering good longevity, and without huge running costs.

Manufactured in Otorohanga and purchased through Te Awamutu-located Buckton dealer Farmline, Peter Holmes says he was pleased to be able to get a locally made product to suit his needs.

In order to take a closer look at this new machine, I headed to Arapuni, South Waikato where the Holmes family farm spreads out across 250ha (190ha) beneath the Maungatautari reserve.

Converting from drystock some 20 odd years ago, Peter's daughter is now share-milking a 500 cow herd. With the rolling nature of the Holmes property, a travelling irrigator is set up to cover around 40ha of the easier country closer to the shed. The Buckton SL7500 slurry tanker is ideal for targeting some of the lower fertility and steeper areas of the farm, that would otherwise miss out on effluent.

With two effluent spreading options; a travelling irrigator and Buckton tanker, the chances of being unable to spread effluent when the weather is unsuitable or due to breakdowns, are minimised.

Through summer and autumn, Peter – who does most of the spreading with the Buckton tanker – aims to spread a couple of loads per day to keep on top of the job, rather than filling the pond in order to spend a week spreading at a later date.

With a large 75x25 metre feed pad, cow and feed waste is washed off with green water from the dairy shed. Peter has his suction pipe set up in the stone trap to fill the tanker. I was impressed with how well it sucked down to the bottom considering how thick the effluent was getting.

Peter said occasionally stones will get into the tank, which can cause a blockage in front of the spreader plate. Small stones in the tank sometimes don't let the rear hydraulic spreading outlet shut and seal properly, to create a vacuum for filling next time. Both issues are easily fixed though. The top hatch and rear opening allow access to hose out the tank if you have sucked in stones.

I really like the simplicity of the Buckton tanker. You have to get off the tractor and hook up the pipe to fill the tanker; once this is done you can change the pump from suction to pumping, without needing to get off the tractor again.

The only hydraulic connection required is for the rear outlet to begin spreading. When you want to stop spreading, just shut the rear outlet again. The basic rear spreader plate is just that; it does the job perfectly well for a fraction of the cost of a dribble bar or injector system.

The spread is around 10m, the amount put on after that is decided by your forward speed and the distance between runs. As applicable to the Holmes farm, being able to transfer fertility back to lower fertility areas is the key feature of the Buckton SL7500 slurry tanker.

Operation

It’s all pretty simple really. The PTO-driven pump has a handle on top with three positions; suck, neutral and pump. In 540 PTO speed, you can turn on the pump to start building vacuum while you connect the 150mm suction pipe (standard with 2x 4m and 1 steel probe). Once connected, filling time is four to five minutes at most.

Using the two sight glasses, you know when you are half- or completely full. The change in the sound of the pump will also tell you when you nearing the tank’s maximum capacity.

Once full, you are ready to spread when you get to your paddock. The 7500L Buckton tanker is fitted with an 8000L/min pump as standard, which seemed to be a good size for this tank.

To ensure the tanker completely empties, Peter makes sure his last run is uphill to get a good clean-out. With three tractors on the farm, slurry tank duties usually go to his John Deere 6910.

Kitted up with rear duals, the six-cylinder, 140hp machine is well-suited to the task. With no drawbar suspension, the 7500L tank still travels along nicely behind the tractor on the standard 400/60x15.5 tyres, on an oscillating axle setup. Different tyre configurations are available to suit different conditions should they be required though.

With health and safety becoming more of a focus in farming and other rural industries, the addition of brakes to one axle as a minimum might need to be introduced to tankers of this size in the future.

VERDICT

With a roof going on the feedpad before long, the amount of water heading to the effluent pond will decrease, and with the addition of the new weeping wall, the Holmes may be in the market for one of Buckton's solid spreaders in future.

However, the reliability offered by their simple SL7500 slurry tanker is hard to fault. It also works in perfectly well with the travelling irrigator system.

The benefit with this size tanker is being able to empty their own ponds without contractors if they choose. Also, it's a great tool for trough cleaning to ensure the cows are getting high quality water to drink in order to produce milk in the first place.

BUCKTON SL7500 SLURRY TANKER SPECIFICATIONS

Brand: Buckton
Model: SL7500
Capacity: 7500L
Pump standard: 800L/min
Pump Options: 6500-12,000ltrs/min Battioni/Pagani pumps
Pump lubrication: Automatic
Hose Size: 150mm
Axles: 2
Tyre size: 400/60x15.5

Dimensions
Length: 6.9m
Height: 2.7m
Width: 2.5m
Baffles: 1

Pluses

- New Zealand-made and built for New Zealand conditions
- A simple machine with few moving parts to wear or need replacing
- Specified to suit (Buckton won't give you lights if you're only using it on the farm, for example)
- Tandem oscillating axle great for stability and to handle a variety of contours
- Dual moisture traps for pump protection
- Two sight glasses to show when the tank is full

Minuses

- For safety, brakes on at least one axle as standard would be good option for tanker of this size. Brakes are standard on larger models, however