

PRODUCER COLLABORATION

The feeder does a 15 mile round trip each day starting at 7.00am and finishing at around 10.00am in summer and 1.00pm in winter. To help cut costs the tractor is hired to members or anyone else who is interested for £8.00 an hour.

Each member pays £400 per month which covers all the fixed cost such as labour, leasing, insurance and administration costs. A bank account is kept for the group and the aim is to not make a profit and keep the balance at around £1,000.

Each member also pays an additional cost based on the number of minutes the feeder wagon is on the farm. The cost per minute is adjusted on the basis of the account and currently this is 35 pence per minute.

"This gives you discipline," says Mr Hislop. "The feeder always comes at the same time and you have to be ready. It also makes sure you do everything you can to make feeding as efficient as possible."

Each farm has a loader and makes sure that silage has been cut out and other feeds are ready for the operator.

"As we have all become more efficient and speeded up feeding times the cost per minute has actually gone up," adds Mr Pickford.

Mr Hislop adds: "One of the advantages of the group is that if you go away for the day and the feeder wagon breaks down you have three



other farmers to deal with the problem."

In the spring the group bought a slitter for £1,600—£400 each—to use on the grassland each spring. They are looking at the possibility of sharing other grassland care equipment such

as chain harrows and a fertiliser spreader.

Another area they say they may consider is sharing labour between farms. "It is nice having a good relationship with your neighbours and swapping ideas," concludes Mr Hislop.

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