



full service contractor

ON STEADY GROWTH PATH

JONO AND JESSICA TRIGWELL OF TOTAL AG CONTRACTING PROVIDE A FULL RANGE OF SERVICES FOR THEIR CLIENTS IN THE BEEF AND DAIRY AREA AROUND DARDANUP, IN SOUTHWEST WA.

Most of the work is on flat land, and although there are a few farms with centre pivots, most of it is dryland farming.

Services include spraying, tillage, seeding, hay and silage and spreading.

Jono and one full-timer Jim Betti do the driving and Jessica does the bookwork and general ferrying around of drivers to vehicles, as well as looking after daughter Hayley who is nearly two.

Jono grew up on a dairy farm in this area. He shifted north to become an apprentice with New Holland dealer, De Rosa's Highway Motors in Waroona. He is a tractor mechanic by trade, but contracting was always the plan.

His 'in' to contracting was mowing verges for local government in Western Australia's Kimberly region and the Northern Territory. A friend had the contract and Jono bought a second-hand New Holland TM115 tractor to help out.

After mowing for six weeks, Jono bought a new tractor, a New Holland TM140. Then six months after that he got a new TM120 to run a second mower.

"I bought New Hollands because I know how to fix them. It was a simple, reliable tractor for working on the side of the road."

Jono did 1000 hours and about 7000 km in five months mowing grass. But that was only a stepping-stone on the path to building a successful contracting

ACCORDING TO JONO TRIGWELL THE KUHN LSB 1290 BIG SQUARE BALER IS WELL MADE AND PRODUCES HIGH QUALITY BALES.

business, and Jono always came home for haymaking. He has been full-time contracting back in Dardanup for 10 years now.

The season starts with silage, which usually runs from early September through to November. It is then quiet for a couple

JONO AND JESSICA TRIGWELL WITH DAUGHTER HAYLEY AND DOG BEAR.





LOADING UP TO SPREAD LIME AT NIGHT.

of months with one tractor working doing the odd job spraying or spreading, until they gear up for spreading lime and manure in February for a couple of months.

The towed spreader is a 10-tonne Marshall Multispread. The Multispread has two main attractions. It will spread many different dry products, such as gypsum, lime, compost and fertilisers, as well as some seeds, and it is made 40 km up the road so it is easy to get wear parts.

THE DEMAND FOR SPRAYING IS GROWING AND LAST YEAR TOTAL AG CONTRACTING COVERED 3000HA.

“We are negotiating a new one now. It is time to update as fert spreaders work hard handling corrosive products.”

Spraying is another service for the local farmers. Jono tows a sprayer with a 3200-litre tank and 24m boom behind the tractor. Spray work is getting busier and last year he covered 3000 ha. He is getting ready to upgrade the sprayer to one that has auto shut-off.

Spraying provides summer work. Applications include selective broad leaf control and insecticides mainly to target mites and cutworm.

“Cutworm was a big problem last year. One farmer had to re-seed half the farm.”

There’s a growing demand for liquid fertilisers and trace elements and this can be combined

with another liquid such as bug spray.

A 26m³ Bunning manure spreader made in the UK works hard for dairy farmers. Jono or the farmers clean out laneways and sheds and silt traps, then Jono or Jim spread the solid muck on paddocks at the end of the season.

The Bunning has two rear vertical augers that throw the muck over a 10m-12m strip. “It is a good solid, simple machine that’s well proven.”

In March, Total Ag Contracting uses a 6.0m-wide Brookfield chain bar cultivator to knock out weeds and prepare a seedbed.

“The chain bar is a cross between discs and harrows. It incorporates the cowshit and levels the paddock. It is good for stubble management and dealing with weeds. I have found it really good in clay, as it doesn’t work too deep, so it doesn’t get too wet in winter. It’s a quick one-pass machine.”

Jono has a Maschio power harrow for preparing maize ground. It is a 5.0m folding model which he bought second hand.

Seeding is from March onwards ready for the rains, which hopefully arrive in April.

The seeder is a 6.0m double disc Sow-Ezy, made in Queensland and bought four years ago.

“A disc seeder gives us more

TOTAL AG CONTRACTING RECENTLY ADDED A LELY TIGO 60 RD PROFI SILAGE WAGON TO DO PIT SILAGE.

scope for work. It goes through a lot of trash, into an established crop without damaging it or into cultivated ground. There’s basically nothing we can’t seed into.”

Most of the seeder’s work is direct drilling, mainly re-seeding paddocks where hay and silage has been cut. Jono says the Sow-Ezy is a solid, compact machine and very manoeuvrable with good placement.

“The double disc units are all parallelograms that give good placement and good ground following.”

He says 90 percent of seeds sown in the area are ryegrass and clover mixes. There are also some summer crops such as sorghum and millet for cattle feed.

It has fixed row widths of 6.5 inches and an electronic seed drive so is easy to calibrate. It has three bins, which can be used for fertiliser, a main seed, and a small seed, or all the bins can be used for one type of seed.

ABOUT TWO THIRDS OF THE BIG SQUARE BALES THE BUSINESS MAKES ARE USED FOR BALEAGE.



MOWING WITH THE FRONT-REAR LELY MOWER CONDITIONER.



◀ The first season Jono had the Sow-Ezy, he drilled 100oha. Four years later he's doing 180oha.

He makes round and large square baleage and recently bought a forage wagon for pit silage. He harvests some lucerne, but 95 percent of the workload is pasture.

Mowing is with a set of Kuhn doubles or Pottinger triple mower/conditioners. Jono and Jim do their own mowing for the baler and forage wagon, and also for other contractors.

"With bigger mowers we cut more in less time. It cuts the cost of diesel and wages and we cut in a more timely fashion to optimise the sugars in the grass."

The Pottinger triple mower speeds up the job and has few disadvantages on the flat land. Paddocks range in size from 1.oha to 5oha.

"The Pottingers were second hand. I did my research and they were highly recommended by the people who operate them."

"I have been really impressed with how they handle what I have thrown at them. We do country with bull holes, heavy and light crops, rough ground. They do a good, clean cut and a good job of conditioning."

Jono says the conditioners dry the crop more evenly, and the quicker it is in the stack the better the quality.

Front mowers are more vulnerable to damage than the rear ones. One of the joys of auto-steer is that the operator can focus on looking for problems ahead since they do not have to attend to steering.

Early in the season with more

THE SOW-EZY IS A SOLID, MANOEUVRABLE SEEDER THAT DELIVERS GOOD PLACEMENT, JONO TRIGWELL SAYS.



A TRUCKLOAD OF LIME IS DELIVERED TO BE SPREAD WITH THE MARSHALL MULTISPREAD.

moisture around Jono uses an old Kuhn 5001 GF tedder. Most farmers have their own tedder and do any tedding if needed, so it doesn't get a lot of use.

Another reliable machine is the Claas 780 liner rake. Jono says it has never let them down, and it has only needed wear parts.

The round baler is mostly used for hay, with only about 25 percent of the workload on silage. The baler is a New Holland BR7070, variable belt that makes 3.oft-6.oft bales. Jono makes a few 3.oft bales for horsey people, but most silage bales are 4.oft, and hay bales are 5.oft.

"I got a New Holland baler because they are familiar and for the resale. They are just a good baler."

Over the last hay season Jono tried the latest New Holland baler, an RB180 with Intellibale. He and his drivers were really happy with the bales.

"The bales are fantastic, the perfect shape." Their latest tractor is ISOBUS compatible and can talk to a smart baler. Jono says he is waiting to ensure all the bugs are sorted before getting one.

"The baler talks to the tractor and when the bale reaches the right size it stops the tractor, ejects the bale and wraps it all by itself. You just sit there."

When the bale is ejected it

advises the driver and the driver puts it into forward and they start again. Theoretically the baler could re-start the tractor, but as a safety feature the driver has to decide to continue so anyone approaching the stopped tractor cannot get incorporated into the next bale.

The big square baler is a Kuhn LSB1290 bought in 2011. Jono says every man and his dog had a round baler, but a big square gave him his own niche where he works.

He chose a Kuhn because it is simple and well made.

"I really like the integral rotor and auger feeding system on the front. It is one big unit that handles a lot of grass and minimises blocking."

"It has the single knots, so there is less to go wrong and it

is easier for farmers to pull the strings off and feed out."

He also likes the Kuhn LSB's feeder fork design.

"It gives consistent bale flakes and even bales. The grass is packed to the top of the bale so they don't round over. They are tighter for cartage and better baleage for feeding out."

The demand for big squares is slowly growing as farmers get bigger tractors and it becomes more efficient to feed out fewer large bales rather than more smaller ones.

Most of the large bales are for silage, and about a third are hay. ▶

CULTIVATION AND SEEDING ARE TWO OF THE SERVICES TOTAL AG CONTRACTING PROVIDES.



JONO TRIGWELL USES A 5.0M FOLDING MASCHIO POWER HARROW TO PREPARE MAIZE GROUND.





THE TOTAL AG CONTRACTING DISPLAY AT DAIRY INNOVATION DAY, 2017.

“It is the biggest in the T7 range and stands out from the competitors. The main reason to get it is not so much the power, as the weight. It has a 2.0 tonne weight on the front linkage and rear wheel weights.

“The lime spreader is 15 tonnes loaded, the big square baler is 12 tonnes full and the manure spreader is 30-35 tonnes loaded. So I need big solid gear on the front.”

Another reason for so much power is to give the best customer service.

“We have big gear to be more efficient for the farmer and for us. We get the jobs done quickly and well using technology, so we get the repeat business. Without farmers we would go broke. I am from a farm so I want to see the results that benefit us all.”

Jono and Jim are both mechanics, so between them the off-season is busy with maintenance and rebuilding.

“I like to have new tractors as they have to be reliable and they are the hardest working gear. I like the balers to be new as well, because with second hand you never know what has happened to them before. But the other gear can be second hand. With two mechanics to do repairs, it makes a huge difference.”

He also likes to buy spreaders new and change them regularly as they handle corrosive products. **AC**

THE NEW HOLLAND BR7070 BALER IS MAINLY USED TO MAKE 5.0FT HAY BALES.

TOTAL AG CONTRACTING IS STILL GROWING

That means they tend to add more gear rather than trade-in.

“We are getting to the stage where we will probably go for new gear more often,” Jono says.

“We are doing more work so it has to keep going, and we will have to change more often. It’s best to buy good gear and keep it in good condition to do a good job.”

Jono and Jessica’s business plan is to get the gear paid off to cut down repayments and keep growing.

“I want to grow to the stage where we have good, efficient gear busy all year around,” he says. **AC**

◀ Jono reckons all machines work harder with silage than hay, but the Kuhn big square baler will handle anything you throw at it.

Very few of the bales are wrapped. There are a few home-made wrappers in the district and Jono subs out the work if a client particularly wants individually wrapped or tube-wrapped bales.

Most bales go into a big stack with a cover. “It’s the cheapest way to cover them. When they open the stack it does start to spoil, but if they have, say, 200 in a stack and take 20 a day, it’s only for 10 days.”

Jono recently added a Lely forage wagon to compete with choppers in the area and to create more work without spending a lot of money gearing up.

“It gets on the paddocks earlier, and it is just a tractor and a wagon so there’s less staff, which makes it cheaper for farmers. If we are working close to the stack it is very cost effective compared to a self-propelled chopper.”

Contractors have a lot of mon-

ey tied up in machinery. Jono says he and Jessica have been doing the books and they spent \$500,000 on two tractors in the last 12 months.

When Jono moved home permanently a decade ago he bought a Case IH Puma 225 CVT. He abandoned New Holland on this occasion as he needed a bigger tractor quickly to pull the big square baler he had just bought and the dealer couldn’t provide what he wanted in that time.

He still has it. “It hasn’t missed a beat in 7500 hours. I love it.”

The two new tractors are New Holland, however. A T7.245 and a T7.315.

All Jono’s tractors have CVT and do 50 kph. He and Jim do a lot of road work, so 50 kph is a must.

“The CVT is best for coping with our varied workload. We can be doing 2.5 kph on the power harrow then up to 25 kph spraying and spreading, and the CVT is simple and efficient whatever we are doing. I really rate them.”

The Puma came with auto-

steer, and once he had it, every tractor since has been on auto-steer.

“The best thing about it is you can do a really good job for the farmer. It is always accurate and you work the machines close to capacity. It is more efficient.

“Another big thing is reducing driver fatigue. The operators can be in the cab for 16 hours and they get out fresh. It extends the working day and, if we need to, we can work at night.”

The T7.245 arrived in November 2016 and did 1500 hours in 12 months with no issues. It is a Blue Power option which means it has all the bells and whistles – full ISOBUS III, autosteer, CVT, cab suspension, front suspension and front linkage and PTO. ISOBUS is important as it gives him the option of an Intellibale.

Blue Power also looks the part with an overall metallic midnight blue paint job, silver wheel rims and chrome-coloured grill.

The T7.315 arrived in October. It is another Blue Power option.

