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GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR MACDON MACHINE



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MacDonPERFORMANCE

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MONTANA WHEAT FARMER JERRY MCRAE WINDROWS TO MANAGE SAWFLY DAMAGE.

awflies. They've stolen profits from farmers across the North American prairies, and in Central Montana on Jerry McRae's family farm they are as bad as anywhere. If you're not familiar with what the little scourges can do, imagine a perfectly ripened field of wheat lying flat in the field just as if someone had gone through it with a sickle. According to the website allaboardwheatharvest.com just one downed wheat head per square foot adds up to a bushel in losses every acre. Multiply that by the approximately 12,000 acres (4856 hectares) of wheat that the McRae family harvests every year, and you get a sense of what damage the pests can do.



"You see sawflies start flitting around in June," says McRae from his farm near the town of Dutton in Montana's foothills. "They lay their eggs in the stem of the wheat and the larvae prepare to overwinter in the lower stem by sawing the upper stem away, weakening the stem. In a field that's been damaged you can grab an armful and it's just like it's been swathed. Perfectly nice cuts – it's a terrible thing."

Wheat stems that have received sawfly damage will fall with the slightest wind, resulting in downed or lodged crop. That, of course, can cause significant headaches when combining so McRae chooses to swath his wheat first before the sawfly damage becomes too great.

"We usually start swathing one week before we start cutting – typically the last week of July but sometimes the third week. When we first start our crop is usually all standing, but by end of the three week period that it takes to get it all done we've never finished where some of the

crop is not a wreck due to some wind." McRae says that they had particularly bad luck with weather this year, resulting in an uglier harvest than normal.

"This year we swathed maybe two or three days before a big thunderstorm, with hail, hit the crop. You always know you're going to get at least one thunderstorm in the three week period, but this year it was inopportune that it happened so early in the harvest. That's Montana. Its tough weather; Glacier Park type weather."

For swathing the McRae family currently owns four MacDon M155 Windrowers mounted with 40' (12.2 m) D65 Draper Headers. He says that he started running MacDon swathers several years ago, initially with the M100, and routinely trades in for newer ones every year.

"We put 280 hours on our swathers, more or less, and then trade them in right after harvest. It's a good deal that our dealer has worked out

for us. And we definitely like our MacDons.

The swathers are a given because nothing ever happens to them."

But the real selling point of a MacDon windrower says McRae is its draper header, not just for him but other farmers in the area.

"Those of us that have our own combines typically swath, because we know the value of not sending rocks through the combine. And, for most producers around here, MacDon is the header of choice. In fact, there are not many of the competitive headers left; MacDon has aced them out."

He says that header durability is key given the tough, rocky harvesting conditions they face, and that is why MacDon is the choice of so many farmers he knows.

"You know, this is tough country. There's some abuse that goes on, not on purpose, but



because you are moving as quickly as you possibly can at all times to stay ahead of the weather. The reel is scraping the ground so you are raking gravel a lot of the time, especially when you bounce over a rock."

McRae says that sawflies make an already tough job worse because it forces them to run the header as low as possible to recover as much wheat as possible.

"Even in normal operation, that thing has to just about touch the ground to get what's there. Typically we're just skimming the ground, no more than an inch off it. The reel is scraping rocks, gravel and anything else right on to the sickle."

"As far as sickles and guards we don't do those headers any good by the time we're done with them, that's for sure. We put over 1,200 sections in during operation this year. That's 300 sickle sections per swather. Most of that damage occurred during the last half of the harvest when the crop was down because of the weather."

Still, despite all the abuse, McRae says that windrowing remains the way to go as it saves

eaten a 40' (12.2 m) swath. Swathers back then were 20' (6.1 m). The average guy now, using custom cutters, can finish harvest in a week to 10 days. We harvest 80% of our crop with our own combines so our harvest normally lasts around 21 days."

"IN A FIELD THAT'S BEEN DAMAGED YOU CAN GRAB AN ARMFUL AND IT'S JUST LIKE IT'S BEEN SWATHED. PERFECTLY NICE CUTS."

his combines from taking similar abuse trying to pick-up sawfly damaged crop. One thing he does appreciate is the significantly higher productivity of today's equipment such as his MacDon windrowers with 40' (12.2 m) draper headers.

"Harvest on this many acres 20 years ago would have taken two months and five to 10 combines. No way those combines would have "The bigger equipment lets us do more land with far fewer people. That's important because its getting harder and harder to find good help. The only way you can own three combines is to have lots of acres, so we keep looking to expand. It's a vicious cycle just like any other business."

IMITATED, BUT NEVER DUPLICATED

It's been ten years since we introduced the FlexDraper® to the market and our patented platform has yet to be matched. Featuring MacDon *FLEX-FLOAT TECHNOLOGY* $^{\text{TM}}$, our FD75 FlexDraper® continues to advance harvesting

innovation. The *FLEX* advantage comes from a fixed reel to cutter bar relationship which maintains a small *CRITICAL GAP* between the reel fingers and cutter bar... While our *FLOAT* allows for instant lateral and vertical response over rolling and uneven terrain. The result of our *FLEX-FLOAT TECHNOLOGY*^m is smooth, consistent, heads-first feeding that significantly boosts combine productivity.



HERE'S HOW FLEX-FLOAT TECHNOLOGY™ WILL HELP WITH A QUICKER, MORE EFFICIENT HARVEST...

1 CLOSE REEL TO CUTTER BAR RELATIONSHIP (A.K.A. CRITICAL GAP)

The MacDon FD75 FlexDraper® features a fixed reel to cutter bar relationship. A small *CRITICAL GAP* between the reel fingers and the cutter bar is maintained at all times, even when in full flex, ensuring smooth feeding of the crop over the entire width of the FD75 Header.

2 TRUE GROUND FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS

The MacDon FD75 FlexDraper® is a floating, three-section flexible header with a split reel allowing the entire header frame, reel and cutter bar to follow ground contours as a unit – while maintaining a small, consistent reel to cutter bar relationship (*CRITICAL GAP*) important for smooth crop feeding to the combine.

3 ACTIVE FLOAT SYSTEM

The CA25 works with the auto-header-height-control of the combine to provide instant float-response over changing ground conditions. Coil springs mechanically provide lateral and vertical float of the header, independent of the combine feeder house allowing the FlexDraper® to float over rolling and uneven terrain.

4 REEL PERFORMANCE

The MacDon reel offers four adjustable cam positions, allowing you to select the setting that best suits your harvest conditions. Positions one and two are for optimal harvest conditions with ripe standing crop and no green weeds or undergrowth. Positions three and four allow you to put the reel in front of and below the cutter bar for lifting downed and low podding crop. You can also use the header tilt and fore-aft reel positioning for even more aggressive action when required.



UNDERSTANDING THE CRITICAL GAP

The MacDon FD75 FlexDraper® features a fixed reel to cutter bar relationship. This means a small CRITICAL GAP between the reel fingers and the cutter bar is maintained at all times, even when in full flex. This small gap ensures smooth, consistent, heads-first feeding of the crop over the entire width of the FlexDraper® Header, up to 45' (13.7 m). Performance like this is the reason why more top producers and custom harvesters trust MacDon with their harvest.

FD75 FLEXDRAPER®

The MacDon FD75 FlexDraper® is a floating, three-section flexible header with a split reel allowing the entire header frame, cutter bar and reel to follow ground contours as a unit – while maintaining a small, consistent reel to cutter bar relationship. This means excellent ground following capabilities even on terraces or ditches without compromising smooth, consistent, heads-first feeding to the combine.



THE OTHER GUYS

The other guys' rigid frame relies on the movement of the flexible cutter bar to follow ground contours. To accommodate this, the reel fingers must have excessive clearance to avoid damage from the cutter bar. This large gap and inconsistent relationship between the reel and cutter bar, results in uneven feeding of the crop.











he caravan of custom wheat harvesters that moves northward from Texas every summer contains many family operations; but none smaller or tighter than that of the Zeorian family. With just one combine, Tracy and Jim Zeorian and their two youngest daughters Taylor (19) and Callie (16) are continuing to prove that it is possible in this world of big agriculture – and big expenses – for a single combine custom cutting operation to still make a success of it.

"We're not rich, but we've made it work," says Jim taking time out from their work in Jordan, Montana, the family's last stop of the 2013 harvest before returning home to Nebraska to pick up some fall work there. "Both Tracy and I have been around custom cutting since the mid 70s when I was a hired hand for her family's operation. After getting married in 1982 we continued to cut off and on with Tracy's Grandpa and Dad.

"WE'RE NOT RICH, BUT WE'VE MADE IT WORK."

The economy was making it tougher to continue supporting three families. But in 1991 Tracy and I finally took the gamble, bought a new Case IH combine and left two weeks later to see what we could do on the road with one combine and a young family."

Back then the girls with them – they have four in all – were Jamie and Jenna, their two oldest daughters. Jamie is now married with a young son and Jenna has a job in marketing in Omaha, Nebraska, only 20 miles (32.2 km) from the Zeorian's home in Manley. Initially, Jim and a hired hand did the combining while Tracy managed the vital support work of taking care of the shopping, laundry, cooking and, of course, the children. But in 2001, once their oldest daughters were capable of taking over the housework, Tracy was able to live her childhood dream of being a combiner (see page 11, *Born to Cut*) and join Jim in the field. The move allowed the family to save on the cost of a hired hand, money they could now put towards their children's college educations. Tracy says her move to the field was both helpful and a little bit selfish as she was doing something other harvest wives might not have a chance to do.

"Our girls have grown up knowing that they have had to take charge of the job that I had been doing," says Tracy. Most harvest wives do the cooking and the housework for the crews because it's a very important job that needs to be done. They don't have the opportunity to go out into the field and work as I do."



In addition to the family's New Holland Combine, mounted with a 35' (10.6 m) FD75 FlexDraper®, the Zeorians also maintain a Peterbilt, a Freightliner straight truck, two pickups, a fifth-wheel travel trailer (their

header trailer. After we reach our new job, we'll drive the pickup back to get the trailer house and the rest of the crew. Jim pulls the trailer house with the pickup, I drive the Freightliner pulling the car trailer (hauling the

"OUR GIRLS KNOW THAT WHATEVER THEIR JOB IS, THAT IT IS AS IMPORTANT AS MOM'S OR DAD'S IOB."

home for 100 days of the harvest journey), and a car. Moving it all from job-to-job is a true team effort.

It takes us two trips to move the equipment each time," says Tracy. "For our first trip Jim will drive the Peterbilt with the combine and grain trailer and I will drive the pickup with the service pickup), while Taylor and Callie drive the car. It seems like a lot of driving but we learned a long time ago we do what we have to do to make it all work."

They will perform this routine eight to 10 times a summer, depending on how many contracts they have, plus one more time when they return

home to Nebraska for the fall harvest there. In total, they will cut in the neighborhood of 5,000 acres (2023.4 hectares) of wheat on the road every summer, plus another 1,500 acres (607 hectares) of corn and soybeans back in Nebraska. Tracy says that it's a big help to have their daughters with them for the bulk of the summer harvest, and believes that they benefit from spending time with the family working hard.

"It's forced family time. Our girls know that whatever their job is, that it is as important as mom's or dad's job. You're all working towards the same common goal. And when you meet that goal it is a satisfaction for everybody, you can look at each other and say 'hey we did a good job' and then move on to the next one."

"I recently chatted with a young harvest wife who was concerned that the life might not be fair for her daughter because she won't get to experience a normal summer with her friends. I tried to reassure her that what she is doing is going to make her daughter unique. Her daughter will be the one that stands out because she will have a work ethic different from everyone else. That's what I see with my kids; I have to believe that the leadership and take-charge attitude they show has something to do with being out in the field and being responsible for where they need to be and taking care of what they need to take care of."

Jim says that despite the hard work and added responsibility, all four of their girls have enjoyed being part of the harvest.

"They enjoy the life. When they are in the middle of it they can become bored, but when they get home they say 'I miss the road.' When they go home early to start school the kids wish they were still with us. In the springtime they are always raring to go."

It's also a life that Jim enjoys, although he admits to being most passionate about the machinery aspect of the job.

BORN TO CUT.

TRACY ZEORIAN DESCRIBES IT AS AN "ADDICTION."

may be a sickness with me. I really think I could sit in a cab every day and not get tired of it," she says about her love of driving a combine. "When the door shuts I am in my own little world. I watch what needs to be watched, and I think about stuff. And, before you know it, it's like holy cow, where did this day go?"

She says her addiction started at the age of 12 when she joined her grandparents - both custom cutters - for the 1974 wheat harvest. She had been invited along to help out her grandmother with the housework and shopping, but it was when her grandfather invited her up into the cab of his 750 Massey combine and showed her how to run it that her world changed. After that day, she would try to get behind the wheel whenever she could.

"I'm not sure exactly what got me hooked," recalled Tracy about that first time. "Maybe just the fact of getting inside that combine and knowing that grandpa trusted me to do it. He would say this is what you do and then he would jump out. He showed a lot of trust; grandpa was just that way."

But more than just the chance to drive a combine for months on end, Tracy says that there are other rewards to be found in the custom cutting life, as hard as the work can get.

"Most of the people we work for are added to our Christmas list; they're more than our customers, they are our friends. We all look forward to that two weeks every summer when we get to be together with each of them again."

"For example, we're sitting in Jordan, Montana, right now, and this is our 32nd year being here. I pulled into this town with my grandpa and grandma as a 19 year old kid. Today we're still here seeing the same people, and have had to say goodbye to some who have passed away. That's the kind of relationship that you develop when you go to the same place year after year after year."

Tracy's passion for the custom cutting life has lead her to become more involved in the political side of the business by joining the US Custom Harvesters Association (uschi.com) along with her husband Jim. With the organization she has not only served as a board member of since 2005, she was also the USCHI's first female president from 2010 to 2013.



"It was my vision when I stepped into being a board member to make the association something that would be a little bit more well known. The industry knew of custom harvesters, but I didn't see that the rest of agriculture knew that we were out there. I didn't see any form of acknowledgement or advertising that recognized what we are doing for the farmer. I wanted the industry to know that custom harvesters remain a good option for farmers, that we're fulfilling an important need."

She says that within the last several years, because of the work of the Association and its efforts to become more involved with other agricultural organizations, that the work of custom cutters has gained a higher profile within not only the ag world, but also in Washington, D.C.

"When we go to Washington now they no longer look at us like 'what is a combine?' They know who we are. That's a huge thing for us, the fact that the world knows who U.S. Custom Harvesters are now."

In addition to her work for the association, Tracy also works hard promoting and educating about the lifestyle through her own Internet blog (nebraskawheatie.com). Anyone interested in reading more about the custom cutting life is urged to check it out.



"I'm a guy that loves machines. I grew up as a farm kid without a farm, but got to do everything any other farm kid would do;

through our first one, an FD70, with no issues except one small hole in the pan under the auger." says Jim. We've now got one full season

"I THINK MACDON'S FLOTATION IS **JUST GREAT."**

driving tractors, trucks and everything that goes with them. It's a great life when everything is running. When things aren't, you sometimes question why you are doing it."

For the most part things have been running well for Jim and the family, especially their MacDon FD75 FlexDraper® Header.

"This is just our third season with a MacDon. We had run over 10,000 acres (4046.9 hectares)

under our belts with our new FD75, and I can say its a good header. It runs as it's supposed to. We get more done each day. The darn thing just works."

While there are many things that Jim likes about the FlexDraper®, such as it has allowed him to eliminate the cost of also owning a dedicated soybean header. What he likes most is its mechanical flotation system which uses springs instead of "complicated electronics and hydraulics."

"I think MacDon's flotation is just great; it's the miracle mystery of what really makes it work. The engineers that perfected that design should pat themselves on the back for an amazing feat of engineering. I know good machinery guys who look at how the head is carried on springs and just shake their heads. They can't figure out how it works so well."

According to Jim, the Zeorians were among the last of the custom cutters to convert to using MacDon headers on their combines. Before that he had stubbornly continued to use more traditional auger heads, even though it meant getting ribbed about it from time to time.

"I have good friends that have run MacDons consistently for about 10 years. The son of that operation would laugh at me and say 'Jim, you've got to get out of the stone age. You've got to run a MacDon.""



rowing up on a leased dairy farm near Egg, Switzerland, a small agricultural community just outside of Zurich, Meinrad Kaelin wanted something more for his life.

"It was always my dream to have a grain farm in Canada," recalls Kaelin from his farm near Saint-Pascal-Baylon, Ontario. "I remember seeing a documentary of a Swiss family that had gone to Canada and all the nice land and machinery that they had. I just fell in love with that. Also, the farm papers were full of auctions for people who were selling their farms and moving to Canada. That just fueled my dream to get there and farm, even though I didn't know if I could afford it because we had no land to sell."

"IT WAS ALWAYS MY DREAM TO HAVE A GRAIN FARM IN CANADA."

Then in the fall of 1993, still without any idea if his dream was possible, Kaelin took a three week tour of Ontario, Quebec and Manitoba with his wife, Therese, his brother, Edgar, and his 18 month old son Roman. Their objective was to see what types of farms were for sale. Surprisingly they actually found an affordable farm they liked in Ontario, but none of their immigration paperwork was in place so they had to let the opportunity pass. His dream was on hold, but not for long.

"In March of '94 a Swiss broker that was helping us called and said 'I have two farms that will work for you.' We came over almost immediately and my brother and I put an offer in on one of them."

CANADA DREAMING.

By the end of '94 Kaelin and his young family had moved to Canada to take up their new life on the farm they had bought near Saint-Albert; a 150 head dairy farm that was in need of an update.

In only three-and-a-half years the Kaelins were able to turn the farm around and sell it for a larger 300 head dairy. Still it wasn't the grain farm that Kaelin had left Switzerland for, so in 2003 they decided to sell off the herd and their milk quota. With the profits Kaelin expanded the farm to its current 2,250 acres (910.5 hectares) and began farming soybeans, corn

"WHEN YOU DO IT LIKE I DID, YOU LEARN THE LATEST METHODS **AND PRACTICES** OF PRODUCING."

and wheat, while his brother purchased an adjoining property to begin another dairy independently. Kaelin says that knowing only the dairy business meant that he had much to learn, especially those first few years.

"It was a learning curve all along because we never grew crops in Switzerland, only hay."

So he became an avid student of grain farming, attending seminars, talking to crop consultants and reading everything he could find. In the end, Kaelin says that not knowing much to begin with turned out to be an advantage.

"When you do it like I did, you learn the latest methods and practices of producing. There's nothing to unlearn; you're not trapped by tradition. Our farm is on the very northern edge for corn and soybean growing.

We don't have a long window in the spring to plant, so there's no fooling around."



Kaelin's inclination for non-traditional methods even extends to his choice of header for his 7120 Case Combine, a 35' (10.6 m) MacDon-built FlexDraper®. He recalls that most farmers in the area were doubtful that MacDon's three-section flex concept would work as well as more conventional header designs when it was originally introduced.

"Everyone was skeptical at that time; me too. They said 'it's not a flex head, it's solid." But when I examined the concept and saw how its three sections followed the ground, I understood how it should work better, and it did."

"What I like about MacDon's concept is that it is a lot more simple than what the other

companies have come out with. It has to be simple because if something breaks you have to be able to repair it in no time."

"I think the MacDon-built FlexDraper® is phenomenal. I've never had a header like it once it's set up, you never have to touch it. It flows a lot better. The capacity is really good and it cuts really nice at high speeds. I have gone as fast as 6 MPH (9.7 km/h) and it doesn't leave stubble a foot long like other headers at that kind of speed. The MacDon design is really superior for that."

Another thing he likes about his header is that it eliminates the need for an air reel, something that was mandatory with other flex cutter bar concepts.

"We used to have to have those air reels. Sometimes at night you couldn't see anything because of the dust in front of the combine, something that you don't get with the FlexDraper®. The air reels are not needed because there is no auger and no dead triangle. You can harvest with the header all night long and it would never bunch up."

Kaelin says that the only reason to stop harvesting for him now is because the beans are too damp. Even then, he can harvest earlier in the morning and later at night when cutting soybeans.

The other time saving feature of his header that he really likes is its slow-speed transport package, which allows him to detach the header and tow behind the combine when moving from field to field.

"Most people around here don't have it, but I like it. It's a lot easier to set the header down on both wheels than if you have to put it onto a header wagon. You just fold up your wheels. It only takes me two minutes to get it ready. It's a real time saver for me."

OUT FROM THE SHADOWS.

MACDON INCREASES ITS BRAND PRESENCE IN ONTARIO AND QUEBEC.



isitors to two major farm shows in Ontario and Quebec, Canada, in 2013 witnessed something new - a MacDon booth. This stronger presence for MacDon at both Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock, Ontario, and Expo-Champs in St. Liboire, Quebec, coincides with a major change in how farmers will purchase the new 5 Series MacDon FlexDrapers at many dealers starting in 2014.

"Farmers have been using MacDon built FlexDrapers in Ontario and Quebec for almost 10 years now, but for many of them it was as an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) supplied product for their combines," says Ghislain Beaudin, MacDon's Marketing Consultant for Eastern Canada. "Now those farmers will be able to purchase the new 5 Series FlexDraper® technology."

Beaudin says that in almost every instance, dealers that once sold FlexDrapers as an OEM product have decided to continue to handle the header under the MacDon

brand. Dealers will be able to offer their customers a MacDon branded product for most current model combines.

"Dealers truly want the FD75. My phone hasn't stopped ringing since the shows. I even have some interested in handling MacDon's entire product line, including MacDon's windrowers and haying products."

According to Beaudin the brand change on the endshield should result in a few benefits for the dealer, even though the product itself will remain exactly the same.

"The biggest advantage dealers will experience is that they can now deal directly with the people who build the product. If they have a question they can call up MacDon in Winnipeg directly and speak with a product representative."

And, of course, farmers will now also have a chance to kick the tires on new MacDon products more often at farm shows. Make sure to stop by and visit the MacDon site at a farm show near you.



IMITATED, BUT NEVER DUPLICATED.

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Fits Most Current Model Combines.



See the MacDon FD75 FlexDraper® in action at MacDon.com/videos

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