

JUST DOING IT

Hedges, lots of them, mark the Taranaki landscape. *Farm Trader* spoke to a contractor who is using the latest McConnell hedge cutter to trim them into shape.

Words, photos, and video Vivienne Haldane



Kurt has been flat out cutting hedges in the district since he got his new machine

Whoever introduced the hedge plant boxthorn to New Zealand back in the 1800s hadn't bargained on how it would not only thrive but also become a nuisance. Sure, it did the job of providing shelter for stock from the winds that blast across the region, but it also grew so rampantly that it prompted some to invent wacky ways of taming it.

These included a Dodge engine driving a three-metre, propeller-like blade mounted on a Fordson tractor and a converted ex-army Valentine tank nicknamed Ruahine.

Fortunately, Kurt Gifkins of Manaia doesn't need to resort to such measures. Hedge cutting is a large part of the contracting business Doin' It Ltd that he runs with his father Grant and brother-in-law Bevan.

They have recently purchased the McConnel 6085 hedge cutter with a two-metre head from New Plymouth agricultural implement



Doin' It Ltd contracting cover a wide area with barberry and boxthorn hedges and trees too

wholesalers, Agriquip. "This is one of the larger models," Agriquip director Richard Capper says.

In the last two weeks, Kurt has hardly been out of the driver's seat, as he has put it through its paces. He says he is rapt with how it works: "I can't fault it." Hedge cutting is a competitive business in Taranaki; Kurt reckons

there are about 35 operators in his vicinity. "There are lots of hedges that need cutting every year, so having the best equipment keeps you ahead of the game. It's important to do a great job and not have breakdowns.

"I hope that having the wider, two-metre head will be more efficient and keep costs down for farmers."



A two-metre head with F14 flails and 85hp pumps is perfect for the work Kurt does and is efficient



The wider head enables speedy work

Previously, the Gifkins had a McConnel PA 5000 with 1.6-metre head and five-metre reach, which has served them well for the past five years. "It gave us no trouble, and we'd had a good run with it but wanted to upgrade. Richard recommended the two-metre head and I was keen to give it a go."

The beauty of having this extra width is it allows them to cover more surface in a shorter time. Instead of doing two runs along the side and top of a hedge, it requires only one for each surface.

Kurt finds the increase from a 65hp to 85hp pump makes the job easier too. "I was all for that because the 65hp was always dying out on the boxthorn hedges. Life is lot easier now, and it's faster and that's good because we aim to be as efficient as possible."

The McConnel, coupled with his Massey Ferguson 7480 tractor, makes a smart work unit. "It's my office. I sit in there most days, so it is good to have something nice," Kurt says.

"It has the latest and greatest joystick and a computer that gives you all your power take off (PTO) speeds and lets you know how hard the machine is working. It will beep when there is too much load on the rotor."

The axle bracket mounted heavy-duty hedge cutter has an oil cooler at the rear and the latest F14 flails. Its reach is six metres horizontal and seven metres vertical.

Rather than tackling sharpening the blades (or flails) himself, Kurt says he prefers to replace them with new ones all at once. "They last two seasons because I reverse them. They have to be perfectly balanced, otherwise, it offsets the rotor."

When deciding to upgrade, Kurt looked at other similar machines but went for another McConnel because he prefers the right-hand orientation of the machine. "I look over my right shoulder when working, and this works best for me."

So far, his clients are happy with the new hedge cutter. "They say it is great, and I know that just by having the extra width head and power I am cutting a few hours off each job so that's a bonus to them in terms of cost," he says.

Kurt says he will use the hedge cutter from October to July or August when the ground gets too wet to use it.

Grant started Doin' It Ltd 15 years ago. Kurt tells the story: "He and mum were dairy farmers, but dad always wanted to have a contracting business. One day, he bit the bullet and went ahead. Mum said, 'what are you going to call the business?', and dad said, 'I dunno.' Mum said, 'what is it you do then?' and he replied, 'I'm just doin it,' so that's what they called it."



Easily accessible oil filter makes servicing easy, as the hood can be opened right out of the way



Plenty of safety information here



Kurt Gifkins

The Massey Ferguson is a great match for the pa6085 with good stability and great vision



After leaving school, Kurt began a building apprenticeship but then realised it was contracting he enjoyed the most, so six years ago, he joined forces with his father.

Doin' It is busy all year round doing silage, haymaking, cropping, hedge cutting, and hedge mulching.

They've always dealt with Agriquip. "They're a good company to work with. Richard was helpful when we organised this in July, and he stuck with everything he said. It makes it easy when you are dealing with someone whose word you trust," Kurt says. ■

For more information visit the website agriquip.co.nz.



Controls are in easy reach



The V4 Revolution monitor reads real-time machine load and PTO speeds and has various functions on the machine



About Agriquip

- A New Zealand-owned company with a balance of New Zealand-made and imported equipment, Agriquip specialises in quality tractor mounted and driven implements
- Their brands include Spearhead, Marolin, Tuchel, Spreadmaster, and Kingcat
- It is located at 30 Hurlstone Drive, New Plymouth

Just Doin It Ltd's machinery

- Two Fendt and one Massey Ferguson Tractor
- McCornel PA 6085 hedge cutter
- Merlo Telehandler with high reach shelter trimmer with a bale wrapper
- Krone baler
- CLAAS swather
- CLAAS mower
- Amazone power harrow
- Duncan roller drill
- Overum four furrow plough
- Race edger for built up race edges