



At work: Ben Walling, of Walling Contracting Southland, harvests fodder beet using on a Maitland property last week.

# Fodder harvester is hard to beet

The Agrifac Big Six harvester is the only fodder beet harvester of its kind operating in the country. Diane Bishop reports.

A big red beet harvester caused a commotion in Maitland last week. The Agrifac Big Six harvester, owned and operated by Spar Bush contractor Ben Walling, was lifting Brigadier fodder beet on Graeme and Sandra Deaker's Eastern Southland property to feed to dairy cows. Walling imported the six-wheel drive harvester from the Netherlands a few months ago, but this was the first time it had left Central Southland via a transporter. Walling was reluctant to discuss the cost of the second-hand machine, but brand new they were worth about \$850,000. It was the only machine of its kind in New Zealand, but there were two or three other beet harvesters operating in the country, he said. The three-axled harvester could lift about 100 tonnes of beet an hour for storing and feeding directly to cows in wintering barns or on feed pads. As the plant is lifted its leaf was shredded and returned to the paddock as mulch with harvesting usually carried out from April

through to late September. Walling said the high energy beets were an economic milking and fattening feed for both dairy and beef cattle. A common feeding method in Europe, beet had been harvested and fed to livestock in sheds for decades. "Farmers have been harvesting beets for many years in Europe, but it hasn't taken off here yet," he said. The benefit of a three-axle, six-wheel drive harvester is that it has low ground pressure and was able to travel over paddocks resulting in minimal damage to soils. Walling had harvested about 50ha of fodder beet this season and it had been an "expensive experiment", but he expected interest in the crop would grow significantly. "It's the cheapest high energy feed we can grow in Southland," he said. Walling said any farmers wanting to grow fodder beet should get in touch with him as it's important that the right variety was sown.



Weighty: The Agrifac Big Six harvester can lift 100 tonne of fodder beet an hour.



## The Southland Times is turning 150 in November

To mark the event we are planning some celebrations over the weekend of November 9 to 11 for existing and former members of staff.

If you have worked for The Southland Times in the past and would like to join us for these celebrations, which will include a registration evening on Friday, November 9, and a formal dinner on November 10, keep this weekend free and register your interest by completing a registration form at [www.southlandtimes.co.nz](http://www.southlandtimes.co.nz).

We will be in contact in September with those who register to provide full details of the weekend's events.

We look forward to marking this major milestone with a grand reunion of staff.

All queries please phone 03 211 1096 or email [150@stl.co.nz](mailto:150@stl.co.nz)



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