



FOCUS BEDFORD



QUICK FACTS

Gamekeeper	Jamie Osborne Turvey Farms Ltd
Location	Bedfordshire
Area Farmed	25 acres
Cropping	Game cover

Right: Jamie Osborne, the gamekeeper at Turvey Farms, in one of the many strips of game cover on the Bedfordshire farm which were established using the Claydon system.

New method of establishing game covers saves money and produces better results

Establishing game cover crops using the latest strip seeding technology has brought numerous benefits to Jamie Osborne since he introduced it on the large Bedfordshire estate where he is the gamekeeper. Julian Cooksley reports.

Turvey Farms Ltd is a privately-owned 2000-acre estate in Bedfordshire. It hosts 10 days of private and syndicated pheasant shooting each season. Since using the Claydon System to establish game cover crops, quality has significantly improved and costs have decreased. The soil is in much better condition and the population of English partridge has also benefited as stubbles remain largely intact, providing dry ground, food and shelter.

Jamie Osborne, the gamekeeper on the arable estate who identified the potential of this new technology, says the results have attracted widespread interest.

"Growing game cover can be a costly exercise for any shoot," Jamie states. "When I started

here in 2006 the 25 acres of game cover were established using a full cultivation system. This included ploughing, two passes with a power harrow and then drilling, followed by rolling, with all the work being done by contractors. With small patches of game cover spread over the estate it was a huge, time-consuming and expensive operation.

"To make matters more challenging, the estate is in Higher Level Stewardship (HLS), which means that we used many different seeds and mixes. The results were variable, two of the main problems being the weed burden and because covers are drilled in May and June, so if we caught a dry spell the heavy Bedfordshire clay soil soon dried out."

The year after Jamie joined Turvey Farms the contractor, L. E. Barnes & Sons Ltd, purchased their first Claydon drill, a 4.8m V-Drill, which was subsequently extended to 6m. Initially used to drill the farm's oilseed rape crop, in the first year it also drilled 25 acres of wheat direct into stubble as part of a trial to compare it with conventional establishment. The results were so good that they led Jamie to consider whether it could also be used to direct drill the game covers.

"At the time diesel costs were soaring and ploughing game covers was fast becoming a very expensive operation," Jamie explains. "In 2009 our contractor changed their Claydon V-drill for one of the new 6m Claydon Hybrid drills which had just been launched and by



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Jamie Osborne, Gamekeeper at Turvey Farms Ltd

now the whole farm had moved away from the min-till method which had been used previously, so all the wheat, rape, beans and linseed was Claydon drilled.

"A major benefit of that to me as the gamekeeper was that the soil was not inverted and much of the stubble remained, which encouraged wild broods of pheasants. Another big advantage was that the ground remained dry, as well as being smooth and much more supportive, so heavy traffic did not leave any impression, which made getting around the shoot much easier.

"In 2010 I took the plunge and decided to Claydon drill all of the game covers, which are supplied by Oakbank, HLS compatible and have been vital to increasing the numbers of English partridge. As some of the strips were only 3m wide I had to bring in another contractor, Jason Parrish from JP Agri, with a 3m Claydon Hybrid. Having seen first-hand how the farm had benefited from using the Claydon drill I set about a similar theme. The covers were topped off in April and then sprayed off using the small buggy sprayer in early May. At the end of May we started drilling straight into the covers and followed that with the rolls. We have been using the Claydon System ever since and noticed a number of significant benefits.

"Firstly, the cost saving is amazing. Whereas

the cultivation-based establishment was previously costing us around £94 an acre, it is now just £30 an acre to establish game cover using the Claydon system, including rolling. That represents an overall saving of £1600 per year, with much better results.

"Secondly, the whole operation is stress free, because we don't need several passes with different implements and I don't have to show several different people where the game covers are.

"Perhaps the biggest benefit is that the game covers are so much cleaner. Because we are not disturbing the soil, we don't have a mass of different weeds coming through, which would be a challenge to control. Another advantage is that if we have a long dry spell during June and July, as was the case in 2015, the covers don't dry out because the soil has not been disturbed and so the moisture is retained.

"The other thing I have noticed across the whole farm is that because stubble remains on the surface after Claydon drilling there has been a huge increase in English partridge numbers and the system has been massively beneficial to all wildlife.

"Many keeping friends have commented on the quality of the covers and come drilling time I get numerous phone calls asking how

the Claydon system works. All of the arable crops at Turvey Farms are drilled by L. E. Barnes & Sons with their new Claydon T6 Hybrid, which is a good recommendation for how well it performs on that side, and I can certainly recommend the Claydon system for game covers. I know that people who use it will be very surprised at the financial savings and other benefits which it brings."

To find out more, contact CLAYDON on +44 (0)1440 820 327 or info@claydondrill.com

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Contractor Jason Parrish with the 3m Claydon drill which has transformed the establishment of game covers.