



Colton Bros working partners in front of some of their latest machinery

## Hard working, with a range of services to offer and a fleet of reliable late-model equipment, this business continues to expand

**W**arren Colton bought his first tractor and mower at age 18 and provided haymaking services up until 1960 when Colton Bros was officially formed. Brothers Warren, Frank and Doug could see an opportunity to expand the operation from where Warren had started off. Soon after, the company provided an increasing number of services to a rapidly growing customer base. The brothers probably didn't envisage it would grow into the professional contracting business it is today.

The current partners include Warren and Doug Colton, Jim Alpe, Rob Gawith

and Philip Reid. All with their own areas of expertise, the partners alone have more than 170 years' of contracting experience between them. They also employ five permanent staff and, during the height of the season, staff levels can grow up to 20, many of whom are seasonal workers that have been coming back for many years.

"A stable work force, many years of experience and an eye for innovation is what has made this company successful," says Warren Colton, who still has an active role in the business after almost 60 years.

"We offer a large range of services that cover everything from preparing the land and planting the seeds to harvesting the crop,

and often even facilitating the sale process of crops from grower to buyer," he continues.

The company has seen some major changes in the district over the last 60 years. Martinborough is now well-known for its boutique wineries but has also seen increased activity in the dairy sector. Colton Bros has seen a major increase in activity around dairy farmers in pasture renewal, baleage, grass, maize and cereal silage. The winery sector provides contracting activities such as mulching around vines, pre-vineyard establishment work and supply of straw for mulch around the vines.

Another activity that is a large part of the business is the making, storage and supply





Aitchison Airseeder SKA2122 direct drill

of supplements such as feed barley, hay, rye straw, cereal, maize and grass silage.

Colton Bros has an extensive array of modern late-model equipment, with 14 tractors, two combine harvesters, a chopper, high capacity loader, three seed drills and three truck and trailer units, together with numerous other ground engagement machinery. Equipment maintenance is an important area of the business.

"We are always looking at the maintenance aspect of any piece of machinery we are considering purchasing, and like to keep things up to date," says Rob Gawith, who is the working partner in charge of maintenance. Colton Bros has a very well kitted-out workshop and rigorous maintenance programmes in place for all of its equipment.

Colton Bros recently purchased an Aitchison Airseeder Seedking SKA2122 direct drill to replace its third Aitchison AM drill.

"We have always liked the Aitchison

direct drill concept and when we heard that Aitchison was developing a new generation airseeder direct drill based on the proven AM concept, we were naturally interested," says Philip Reid. "It didn't take long to convince us that the new Seedking is a very nice piece of drilling equipment. Not only can we sow up to three products in one pass but this drill will sow in a wide variety of conditions.

"The automated depth control system works well and with very few grease points, downtime for maintenance should be kept to a minimum. We also like the increased trash control and the way the very heavy press wheels are able to close the slot so that moisture is preserved."

Colton Bros will sow in excess of 1700ha this season with direct drilling. One of the drilling activities that has seen recent growth is the direct drilling of winter wheat into maize stubble. The Aitchison Seedking has proved to be very capable of doing this, plus it has the ability to drill in cultivated ground.

Colton Bros bought its first Aitchison drill 15 years ago, and has probably sown in excess of 20,000 ha.



Rye grass sown into maize stubble using SKA2122





Colton Bros using SKA2122 to sow rye grass in extremely dry conditions

"We not only need a drill that can handle light, stony, heavy silt and clay soil types but also extremely dry conditions, and the Aitchison is the only one that will give us that versatility and consistent performance," Reid explains.

"Over the years I have noticed that especially stony pastures get better after years of direct drilling with the Aitchison

style of drills. Stones are not pulled to the surface and the organic layer is visibly getting thicker over time. This enables clients to establish high performing pasture on very stony country," he adds.

Apart from sowing forage and cash crops, the company is involved in harvesting anything from traditional crops such as wheat, barley and maize



Same paddock, four weeks after sowing



Large pivoting press wheels and discs on the Aitchison SKA2122

to coriander, spinach and carrots.

"The busy season for Colton Bros is traditionally between the end of September and the end of May. This year the company will, among other things, sow in excess of 2000ha of cash and fodder crops, with direct drilling new pasture making up a large part in autumn.

"We will fine chop about 2500ha of silage and produce more than 6000 bales of baleage as well as harvest over 1100ha of cash crops," Jim Alpe says.

"Who would have envisaged that 50 years ago!"

The Aitchison Seedking was supplied by Aitchison dealer James Trucks & Machinery from Masterton.

**For more information on the Aitchison Seedking range contact your local Aitchison dealer or call Ross Maxwell on 06 357 9323.**