

# Out with the old

An Irish beef farm has replaced its John Deere loader with a new Schäffer 9640T, but can the German loader live up to its predecessor's solid performance? *FMJ* went to find out

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**A**rticulated telescopic loaders have grown in popularity in recent years, driven by their versatility and perceived advantages over the traditional telehandler concept. German manufacturer Schäffer offers a comprehensive range, one of which - the larger 9640T model - recently went into service on the Purcells' beef farm just outside Nenagh in Co. Tipperary.

The machine takes up the crucial role of diet feeder filling, but will also find favour for a range of other operations throughout the year, including bale loading and stacking, as well as

clearing straw and peat bedded livestock sheds.

While machines from this German manufacturer may not be common, this in no way detracted from their appeal. Having previously run a John Deere 3800 for 15 years, when the machine came up for replacement in 2018 in preparation for winter feeding, a range of different options were considered. The latest 9640T from Schäffer shone through as the most desirable solution, says Albert Purcell.

"We didn't just go out and buy the Schäffer loader without looking at a range of other options first," he says. "We looked at JCB and then took a

Manitou machine on demonstration, which was used by my son Daniel who believed it was over-complicated and thought we would be better served by having a more simple machine with less potential for long-term problems. I already knew a few Schäffer loader users who had all given good reports, so this was a big factor in helping us decide."

When it came to selecting a model from the range, the need for a respectable level of capacity while still maintaining relatively compact dimensions and offering essential manoeuvrability were the most influential factors. These criteria identified the 9640T as the most



Above: A positive level of access is provided to the engine bay for inspection and routine servicing, and the fuel filter is easily reached for changing

## TECH SPECS

- Schäffer 9640T**
- Engine** Deutz, 3.6-litre, four-cylinder
- Power** 136hp
- Transmission** Hydrostatic, dual clutch
- Top speed** 40kph
- Hydraulics** 145L/min, load-sensing
- Lift capacity** 4.2t
- Lift height** 5.4m
- Weight** 8.4t-9.7t
- Height** 2.86m
- Width** 2.33m
- Turning radius** 3.98m

Right: The grab of the ProDig bucket raises well clear for the attachment to be used as a standard bucket



**"We didn't just go out and buy the Schäffer loader without looking at other options"**

► desirable and closely matched to the previous John Deere 3800. Coincidentally, the machine was supplied by the local John Deere dealer who has represented Schäffer for many years and offers an added reassurance when it comes to after-sales support.

**German engineering**

Another factor that heightened the machine's appeal was its German origins, which is seen as being a major positive for Albert. "German equipment is always very well engineered and this has been proved to us over the years with Fendt tractors, which have always served us very well. There were many factors in the design and overall build of the Schäffer that stood out for us and we hope these will give reliable service in the years ahead."

The 9640T is one of the most recently introduced models from the range and comes with a wide variety of optional extras that allow it to be tailored to meet each user's individual requirements. Among these options is a choice of transmission. The standard offering is the HTF (High Traction Force) that delivers the highest thrust through a hydrostatic system.

The second option available is the SPT (Schäffer Power Transmission), which is an electronically regulated system with a higher degree of sophistication over the standard

Right: The machine's cabin interior is well laid out and has been met with operator approval. Doors on either side of the cab help access

Far right: The offside view of the engine bay with the windscreen washer reservoir located on the left while diesel tank refuelling is conveniently reached via the centrally located filler cap

offering. The third and most comprehensive option is SDCT (Schäffer Dual Clutch Transmission), which is based around a powershift transmission with a maximum speed of 40kph and an Eco function. For the Purcells the SDCT system offers the higher travel speed compared to the standard offering, which is restricted to 20kph.

With 500 hours passed and no initial teething problems, the operators are beginning to appreciate the machine's capabilities within the busy winter feeding regime. First for praise is the Deutz engine. The 9640T uses a 136hp four-cylinder engine, which meets Tier 4 Final emissions regulations using a diesel oxidation catalyst and an SCR system. The latter is easily refilled with AdBlue from ground level thanks to the tank's location behind the offside step assembly.

The engine is easy to access for maintenance, while its rear location acts as natural ballast. The one-piece bonnet is released from the rear and,



Above inset: The machine's AdBlue tank is conveniently located behind the offside cabin access steps, which makes for convenient refilling

Above right: In the interests of safety, this load monitoring system warns against unstable operation

Below: The ProDig grab bucket gives a high level of capacity and excellent material retention



once raised, all aspects of the engine bay can be reached, including the filters, which are positioned along the outer edges of the compartment. The diesel tank refill cap is also reached once the hood is raised.

**Operator area**

The cabin benefits from the same consideration when it comes to design and layout. Visibility is good and Albert commends the position



Left: Rear cooling radiators have the option of being specified with a reverse fan function

Right: Crucial areas such as the centre joint reflect essential durability of construction

Below: The machine utilises ZF axes with a 20t rating



Above: The main control console incorporates a new joystick design that controls all main loader and attachment functions as well as direction of travel

Above left: Visibility from the new SCV Plus cabin is positive in all directions

of the central boom, praising the design for its "excellent view in all directions and great driving position." This is aided by narrow pillars, while keeping the rear hood the same width as the cabin means the rear corner blind spots associated with some other manufacturers' machines do not apply.

From the seat, the main right side joystick enables activation of the loader and attachment functions as well as incorporating the forward and reverse shuttle switch. Having the majority of operating functions on a single lever adds to the convenience. The theme of operator orientated design also extends to the positioning of other



Above inset: Albert Purcell farms his beef enterprise with his son Daniel

Left: The grab bucket is produced by ProDig, which manufactures a range of attachments

Right: The windscreen affords a particularly good view over the working area to both ground level and while operating with the boom at maximum upward reach

principal controls, including all main control switches in a series of strategically positioned banks on the side console and within the central dashboard area. Even though the machine offers plenty of choices for attaining a high level of natural ventilation through opening side windows and the possibility of locking cabin doors in a completely open or partially open position, the machine also benefits from an air-conditioning system with a series of strategically positioned air vents delivering good circulation. The real measure of the machine's success is its overall performance.

With a maximum lifting height of 5.4 metres, a wide range of tasks come within the unit's remit while the ability to lift 4200kg to this level is a further demonstration of the capacity it affords.

**Best way forward**

A ProDig grab bucket was purchased next to work in conjunction with the loader, replacing a shear grab on the previous machine. "The shear grab was far too slow and didn't give us any real advantage as we can move across the face of the pit fast enough not to allow secondary fermentation to set in," says Albert. "That's why we saw the grab bucket as the best way forward for the new loader and can work on filling the diet feeder with one attachment."

During typical operating cycles the machine is seen to be fast and responsive in operation while the excellent combination of capacity, stability and compact dimensions make it the ideal solution for the Purcells. Even though early indications are extremely positive, the true measure of the new machine will be its longevity since it is expected to offer the same working life as the long-serving John Deere machine it replaced. However, having been favoured for its simplicity of design and durable construction, it would seem the 9640T could set a benchmark in performance for this active beef farming enterprise. **FMJ**



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