



Smarter moves

As operators seek greater efficiencies, attention is again turning to trailers - and not just aerodynamic improvements. In part one of this review, Brian Tinham looks at options

When it comes to transport assets, fleet engineers have their specification and supplier standards, invariably born of years of experience. That's the industry perception and, for trailers, many might argue it's fair enough. But this doesn't quite reflect best practice reality, as a quick word with enlightened operators reveals.

Pets at Home transport manager Campbell Baxter says of his latest Cartwright double-deck, step frame curtainsiders: "The build is typical Cartwright - a good solid trailer not only to our specification, but with their input as well, which is always useful." In his case, special features adopted include rear-mounted Moffett forklift mounting kits, as well as a bungee rear-mounted load restraint strapping system on top and bottom decks, together with EN12642XL secure curtains.

Pragmatic thinking continues at forward-looking logistics operator Howard Tenens, which recently took delivery of eight new Schmitz Cargobull

S.KO Cool tri-axle deep freeze trailers, for a long-term fruit and vegetable contract. These reefers will be double-shifted 24/7, so they needed to be robust, but group fleet manager Paul Gowland also went for payload flexibility, stating that the double-deck system selected enables up to 26 additional pallets to be transported.

LONG-LIVED AND FLEXIBLE

"We have run our existing Schmitz Cargobull reefers for 12 years - well beyond the life expectancy for a trailer of this type," comments Gowland. "Now we are replacing them, Schmitz was the obvious and indeed only choice."

He explains that the firm's double deck loading system attaches to recessed wall-mounted rails and beams just below roof level. This not only ensures an even and constant airflow, but also provides for simple movement to match payload requirements. And he adds that Schmitz fitted its MF6 PIEK-certified multi-function floor, which, coupled with quiet refrigeration units, reduces noise emissions to sub-60dB.

As always, the devil is in the detail. And there are innovations to consider, too. But, while aerodynamics, disc versus drums and lift/steer axles may be sexy, smart fleet managers will also keep their eyes peeled for others.

Obvious candidates include Knapen Trailers' ultra-robust Dura-Floor moving floor, Transdek's trend-setting urban double-deck and Montracon's so-called universal trailer, which, says the firm, combines the best features of its step frame plant and machinery carriers (www.transportengineer.org.uk).

Less obvious, however - for no other reason than they've evaded the limelight - are developments around light-weighting, by (among others) Chereau, and Arla's tanker cum multi-temperature dry freight double-deck combination, from Gray & Adams and Crossland Tankers (*Transport Engineer*, December 2012, page 8). But there's also the Fleet Remote smart trailer project.

The latter started back in 2011, with TIP Trailer Services and Knorr-Bremse developing telematics capable of predicting everything from trailer

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Peter Sijs



maintenance to driver training needs, as well as load distribution issues, axle overloading, etc. It harnesses existing trailer EBS, load, suspension and, where available, TPMS (tyre pressure monitoring system) sensors, as well as a proprietary ECU and clever Wi-Fi. Most importantly - and TIP and Knorr-Bremse are not alone in this - it is likely that such systems may yet eliminate the need for DVSA's (Driver and Vehicle Standards

Agency) extra non-MOT brake tests, now mandatory three times annually.

Peter Sijs, services and sourcing operations director at TIP, describes the system as providing a virtual on-board mechanic. “Each brake application results in 200 data points and our algorithms track changes in braking performance to forecast maintenance requirements,” he explains. And he confirms that DVSA and others are in advanced discussions aimed at validating this approach as a substitute for roller brake testing.

“Our system uses the TCAN [trailer CAN] standard, so it will work with all trailer brands and equipment,” insists Sijs. “It also sees the tractor VIN so can qualify the combination and, for

example, identify if the trailer has been stolen.” Furthermore, information captured might also feed the European Commission’s promised VECTO (Vehicle Energy consumption Calculation Tool), delivering evidence-based information on combination fuel efficiencies for operators looking to purchase new vehicles.

“We’re moving into series production now [November] and are expecting to implement Fleet Remote big time - certainly as standard across our own fleet of trailers,” says Sijs. “Maintenance forecasting will be available within one year of starting data capture.”

Part two of this feature, coming soon, will examine the pros and cons of popular trailer specification choices. [TE](#)

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