

PRODUCT NEWS

Enzymes overcome new crop diet worries

IT'S THAT time of year again, when barley harvest is well under way and pig producers face the dilemma - how soon can they start putting new crop barley into their rations, and what inclusion rate can they get away with, before digestive problems start occurring and performance goes down.

Peter Pritchard is one of a growing number of people who have found an answer to this problem.

He manages the feed mill and 9,000 pig finishing unit for Wyke Farms Ltd in Somerset. Whilst the biggest earner is the dairy business producing and marketing cheese and butter - made not just from milk of their own 1500 dairy cows, but also using milk collected from 100 other farmers - the scale of the pig enterprise is also awesome.

On units that are scattered across the south, from Shepton Mallet in Somerset to Romsey in Hampshire, the estate is home to 3,500 sows producing over 77,000 finished pigs a year.

Peter's compound feed mill makes almost all the different rations. Total output averages 1,600 tonnes, 1,300 tonnes of which goes



On the move ...finishing pigs on the Lambrook unit of Wyke Farms Ltd.

to the pigs. Most of the grain used is grown locally. But because the estate doesn't grow any cereals, it is all bought-in.

According to Peter, harvest is always a tricky time when it comes to making-up the rations for the pigs.

'Most of the growing and finishing pigs are on a whey and meal diet. The meal is generally 50 per cent cereals - part wheat and part barley.

'By buying forward we normally try to have enough stocks of old crop barley left to be able to start trickling the new crop in gradually - building it up until half the barley

is new crop.

'Even doing this it's noticeable when we start the new crop, with the pigs getting a lot looser in their dung.'

Last year it became obvious stocks of old barley would run out and Peter was faced with the prospect of having to use new crop for all the barley portion of the rations, or pay £125 a tonne for old crop.

He turned for advice to Caroline Bevan, an independent nutritionist who is now part of the Banbury Agriculture group of feed consultants.

The decision was made

to use new crop, with the addition of Porzyme sf (9100) to prevent the digestive problems often associated with new crop barley.

'You wouldn't have known that we were using new crop barley at all. There was no increased looseness in any of the pigs, from sows to finishers, and no visible changes in performance,' said Peter.

'In fact, while it's difficult in pigs to always know exactly what has affected performance, over the period we used Porzyme, daily live weight gain went up and days to finish went down. We saw this not just on the unit here, but also at the Cloford high-health unit.'

Peter and Caroline decided to keep the Porzyme in the ration through the wheat harvest period as well. They are now considering all year round use of other enzymes in Finnfeeds' Porzyme range.

With a difference of £22/t in price between old crop and new crop barley, Caroline worked out that after taking the cost of the enzyme into account, savings of between £2 and £6/t were being made on all finished feed - with an average saving of £3.70/t.