

Arable farmer's mentality applied to making wholecrop

When Simon Ward lost his contract-farming operation in Dorset three years ago, he brought his arable farmer's mentality to his business in Cornwall. Forced to start from scratch on a new premises at Trevorder Farm in Saint Breock near Wadebridge, he knew that growing wholecrop wheat would form an integral part of the farming strategy.

We'd always grown winter cereals to sell as grain on the farm in Dorset," he says. "And we'd just taken what we needed out of the arable system as either wholecrop or crimped grain, to use for the cows."

So, by the time he took over the tenancy of Trevorder Farm, Simon had many years' experience of making wholecrop forage and knew it would be important on the new dairy unit.

"We like wholecrop because it's an insurance against any problems with maize, and it has the added benefit of helping with the quality of the milk," he says.

However, ever since he'd started making wholecrop forage from winter wheat, he says he has struggled to avoid spoilage at the feed face.

"We probably started making wholecrop about 10 years ago," he says. "But we'd always found because it is drier than grass, as soon as the clamp is opened, air can easily penetrate and the forage starts to heat."

Having tried a variety of additives without success over several years, he eventually decided to preserve with Safesil and sheet with O₂ Barrier 2in1, just two years ago.

"We'd used Kelvin Cave products for crimping for many years, so we were already familiar with the range and were happy to give it a go," he says.

Harvesting the wholecrop winter wheat in July and opening the clamp to layer maize on top in October, he says that O₂ Barrier has successfully sealed and resealed the forage and, together with the preservative, kept it in perfect condition.

"We've found this system does just the job," he says. "When we feed out the forage it is stone cold and it's remained that way right through the clamp since we started using Safesil.



For Simon and Alison Ward, preserving the high feed value of wholecrop is essential to their dairy operation.

"It's true the product is more expensive, but when you go to the trouble of doing everything right - maybe using three of four fungicides through the growing season - allowing it to heat up and lose quality at feed-out is just such a waste," he says.

"As tenant farmers we have to pay quite a high rent, so we have no option but to do it right to make the finances of the dairy enterprise stack up," he says. "We now think that using Safesil and O₂ is part of that process and we will certainly continue to use them with this year's wholecrop."

Trevorder Farm Facts

- ◆ 220 milking Holstein Friesians block calving in autumn
- ◆ Milk sold to Trewithen Dairy
- ◆ Milk used for clotted cream and ice cream
- ◆ 9,000kg sold at 4.1% fat and 3.2% ptn (part 3x)
- ◆ SCC 120; Bactoscan <10

Trevorder Farm winter ration (freshweights)

- ◆ 26kg maize
- ◆ 10kg wholecrop wheat
- ◆ 16kg grass silage (mostly Italian ryegrass)
- ◆ 5.5kg blend (24% protein)
- ◆ Protected fat, minerals and salt
- ◆ Up to 5kg concentrates/day to yield in the parlour

