

Education saves pounds



Stephen and Peter Hogg's fourth generation Causey Park Farm, Morpeth, has been farmed under the Countryside Stewardship scheme, with the brothers becoming whole-heartedly involved in the education aspect of the farming scheme. Local schools regularly attend farm days where 8-18 year old students experience all aspects of farming on the 1,500-acre estate. Causey Park Farm operates a mixed farm policy where 650 acres of arable land, 600 acres of temporary and permanent grass land and 90 acres of woodlands provide homegrown grain and fodder for 350 beef cattle and 550 breeding sheep, plus 700/800 fat lambs.

Peter comments, "Being involved in introducing youngsters to good farming practice made us look at our own farm operation and costings. Our old grain dryer isn't very efficient and we were spending time and fuel carting grain and feed around the farm; first to dry it slowly,

then put it through a mill slowly, then cart it to the stockyard area and finally feed it to the cattle."

A fire in a straw barn necessitated change; we were not going to store all our straw in one place again so Stephen decided to split the replacement straw shed into two, with one half containing crimped homegrown barley. By introducing crimped grain into the barn close to the stockyards, transport costs and time have been greatly reduced and, of course, drying costs eliminated. Peter researched the crimping market thoroughly before choosing a Murska 700 crimper from Kelvin Cave Ltd. for the 2011 harvest. The crimper has proved to be a sound investment and changing to crimping has undoubtedly improved the profitability of the beef enterprise.

Peter explains, "We are now able to start our cereal harvest 2/3 weeks earlier when the crop is at its most nutritious, taking the pressure off the rest of our harvest

activities. Harvesting the grain when the moisture content was 35% - 40%, processing it through the crimper and applying Crimpstore before ensiling it has resulted in our stock doing as well, if not better, for a much lower input cost. We feed home produced rations fed from a diet feeder and have averaged 1.25 kg daily live weight gain in the finishing cattle." Stephen is first to admit that a lot of getting the equation right is starting with good stock at the right price and maintaining good husbandry. The farm's aim is to achieve good farming results from good farming practice, and the introduction of a more cost effective method of grain utilization is certainly creating a new interest.

