

Good cow husbandry benefits from modern approach

Leo Rowland and his brother Giles are two modern farmers who manage their farm on good old fashioned husbandry principles. "If we maintain and look after our cows' health, they will look after us," says Leo.

The herd of 350 Holstein cows has an average annual yield of 9,000 litres of milk sold per cow, with around 300 going through the parlour every day of the year. The herd is fed a grass and maize silage-based ration throughout the year which is balanced to accommodate rotational grazing in summer. "The system works for us," says Leo, "but we have to ensure top quality silage."

They ensile in excess of 4,000 tonnes of forage each year, comprising 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th cut grass silage and at least 1,500 to 18,000 tonnes of maize, to ensure adequate forage supplies for the dairy herd. They are aware that being able to make silage of as consistent quality as possible from cut to cut pays dividends in terms of cow health, fertility and productivity; so they were very keen to try a new approach to silage preservation when it was introduced to the UK from Sweden by Kelvin Cave Ltd.

Kelvin Cave's Safesil silage preservative is a special blend of human food-grade preservatives which eradicates and controls all the major silage spoilage organisms (enterobacteria, clostridia, yeasts and moulds), resulting in minimal fermentation losses, lower acid loading and unsurpassed aerobic stability.

With the opportunity to cut a late 4th cut of grass in 2011, and maize silage to make, Safesil was applied to both as a trial. "The resulting silage was excellent," says Leo, "Good analysis, very good stability even in



warm weather, and, most importantly, happy cows!"

Although they have always used additives in the past with reasonable results, they have often found that as soon as a clamp was opened the forage started degrading, resulting in wasted feed in the TMR and a negative effect on the cows' digestive activity and performance. With a large herd an occasional health blip is seen by an immediate yield drop, and it can take a lot of time and effort to track down the cause and put things right. If the fault is with the silage, trying to overcome the problem can prove very costly until the offending clamp is used up.

In late October 2011 Leo went, with three other UK farmers, on a study trip to Sweden organised by Kelvin Cave Ltd. There they visited several farms where the high standard of silage 'husbandry' is

resulting in herds sustaining 11,000 litre average yields, with up to 7,000 litres coming from forage.

Leo feels strongly that it is better to spend on a proven and reliable forage preservative like Safesil which has resulted in improved herd fertility and reduced lameness on their farm, than on expensive rumen buffers and added concentrates. Their aim is to increase yield from homegrown forage, hence their decision to treat all the silage in 2012 with Safesil.

