

Tackle the mycotoxin threat head-on this winter



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With up to 90% of maize silages and two thirds of wholecrop cereal silages contaminated with mycotoxins, the threat to cow health and performance is substantial.

For example, the typical yield response when adding an effective de-activator to rations heavily contaminated with mycotoxins is 2-3 litres/cow/day!

However, mycotoxins affect more than just milk yield and quality. In one research trial, dairy heifer conception rates fell from 87% to 62% when rations contained the mycotoxin zearalenone (ZON).

Other symptoms include rough coats, worsening body condition and the presence of mucus tags – pieces of gut wall – in the manure, plus increased mastitis and chronic lameness from lowered immune function.

The most toxic mycotoxins for dairy cows are ZON, deoxynivalenol (DON) and T2 toxin, generated by the *Fusarium* moulds that infect cereal crops (including maize) pre-harvest.

The aflatoxin B1 (AFB1) produced by *Aspergillus* moulds on the surface of grass silages, moist feeds and dry straights that get wet during storage is also important. It's a carcinogen that can accumulate in muscle tissue (meat) and result in aflatoxin M1 (AFM1) in milk.

Remember that the risk of mycotoxicosis rises significantly during sub-acute ruminal acidosis (SARA), since the number of rumen microbes able to de-activate mycotoxins is reduced and damage to the rumen wall eases passage into the blood. Feeding Vistacell yeast or Acid Buf slow-release rumen conditioner to help stabilise rumen pH can therefore reduce the threat posed by mycotoxins.

Many top herds also now routinely include a ruminant-specific mycotoxin de-activator like Ultrasorb R to protect cow health and production. Ultrasorb R has been developed specifically to be most effective in the rumen, and represents a significant step forward from the previous generation multi-species de-activators.

Conditions in the rumen of a dairy cow are very different to those in the stomach of a pig, so make sure you choose your mycotoxin de-activator wisely!

For more information on Ultrasorb R mycotoxin de-activator phone 02894 473 478.

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