

FOCUS ON LIVEWEIGHT GAIN AND FEED COSTS PER DAY

Balanced diets will be crucial if current market opportunities are to be exploited. Molasses based blends can play a cost-effective role in diet formulation.

“While beef prices are at record highs, so are input costs,” conceded Georgina Chapman from molasses-blends specialists ED&F Man. “But with lower beef imports strengthening the UK market, there will be opportunities especially with good stocks of feed barley on many farms.

“But margins are likely to remain tight, meaning that the crucial KPIs will be daily liveweight gain (DLWG) and daily ration cost/head/day.”

Ms Chapman advises that both KPIs need to be considered together. If the consequence of achieving a low feed cost per day is lower DLWG then the economics will not balance. Using cheaper ingredients may mean that inclusion rates need to increase, impacting on total cost.

“The aim must be to formulate a balanced ration, achieving the target DLWG at the optimum daily ration cost, and then to monitor performance closely. The diet must supply sufficient energy and protein, but also a balanced supply of both to the rumen.

“Molasses blends can play a big part in achieving this. Cane molasses is a rich source of 6-Carbon sugars shown to improve rumen fermentation. It is highly palatable and proven to increase dry matter intake. Trial work has demonstrated that molasses can, increase DLWG, maintain an optimal rumen pH and improve overall digestive efficiency.

“ED&F Man Liquid Products are able to combine molasses with other raw materials to provide a range of products suitable for all situations and systems. Our unique high protein Regulated Release blends are a research proven protein-urea-molasses complex which is an excellent source of both Effective Rumen Degradable Protein (ERDP) and Fermentable Metabolisable Energy (FME).”

With prices not directly affected by the consequences of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and disruption to cereal supplies, Ms Chapman suggests this could be the summer to consider adding a molasses-based blend to growing and finishing rations.



She says that liquid feeds can be particularly valuable in diets containing this year’s home grown cereals. Barley in particular is dry this year as a result of the weather at harvest. Adding a liquid feed will improve palatability, keep dust levels down and minimise waste at feed out, important in helping improve farm efficiency and sustainability. It will also help make the most of higher fibre forages.

With many farmers including treated cereals in diets, Ms Chapman advises it is important to select the appropriate liquid feed. Treatments are added to cereals to make the grain more digestible and to act as a

preservative with cereals rolled or bruised as part of the process.

“If cereals have been acid treated, there will have been no change to starch and protein content in the cereals meaning a Regulated Release blend like Regupro 38 would be an ideal liquid feed to include in the diet.

“Many commercial treatments consist of urea alongside an enzyme or additional protein treatment. The additional ammonia helps to buffer the rumen, allowing higher grain intakes.

“However, these treatments also increase the protein content by anywhere from 3 – 30%. As this is due to urea treatment, the additional protein is highly rumen degradable and in these cases we would advise against a Regulated Release blend, instead selecting a blend such as Stockmol 20 or Molale.

“By selecting the appropriate molasses blend to balance the rest of the diet, it will be possible to formulate grower and finisher rations to optimise the two crucial KPIs of DLWG and ration cost/day,” Ms Chapman emphasises.