

Butterfat boost from SHREDLAGE®

Based near Dorchester, Tom King runs a herd of 650 Holsteins, producing fresh milk for Sainsburys using a primarily indoor-based system, milking three times a day.

“We aim for about 13,500-litres per cow per year. With that in mind we’re pretty focused on making the most of our forage, especially maize.”

“We’re growing about 180ha of maize here which makes up about 60% of the cows’ ration. I’d first heard about SHREDLAGE® on a study tour to the US when we visited a herd that was doing incredible levels of solids without compromising yield. They put much of this success down to the more thoroughly processed grain and extra fibre in their SHREDLAGE® silage.” This sparked Tom’s interest in the concept, he was keen on the idea of getting more fibre into the diet without adding chopped straw or other products that could have an impact on intakes.

“We have never liked adding chopped straw to the ration because it waters down the intake potential of the diet. The maize plant already has a lot of fibre in it and so the idea of processing that fibre in a slightly different way so that it can be used as a butterfat promoter was the attraction for us.”

SHREDLAGE® MAKES BUSINESS SENSE

“That coincided with our silage contractor – Joe Foot – looking into the concept for his family’s own dairy herds and pretty quickly he put together a business case to invest in a CLAAS SHREDLAGE® cracker.”

“After two years of using SHREDLAGE® processed maize, it’s an investment that seems to have paid off. Although there are a number of factors to take into consideration, it’s enabling us to produce higher levels of butterfat without reducing yields.”

Alongside that, the more fibrous structure is felt to aid rumen function and help to hold the ration components back long enough to make sure all the good stuff is properly absorbed by the gut.

LONGER FIBRES MEAN MORE BUTTERFAT

“Completely processed kernels mean all the starch is going to be available to the cow – totally smashed rather than just cracked. Previous foragers using a conventional corn cracker had to chop all the fibre to nothing to get the kernels properly processed. Now, using the SHREDLAGE® processor, we can get longer pieces of fibre through which increases the butterfat percentage in our milk.”

The reasoning for this is that by not adding extra fibre to the ration, the energy portion of the diet is not diluted. That’s enabled the herd to maintain high daily litreages with acceptable levels of butterfat – the only milk constituent that Tom feels he is really able to manipulate to improve the farm gate price. Currently butterfat levels are averaging 3.8% with protein at 3.2%.

Tom King | **Vortex Holsteins** | Dorchester



“Butterfat is the only part of our milk contract which we can really use to increase value as a liquid producer. SHREDLAGE® is a relatively cheap way of increasing our overall income.”

“It’s enabled us to maximise our milk price by keeping butterfat high without spending extra money on buying and processing straw to put into ration. It also doesn’t hit intakes and therefore reduce our overall litres.”

FEED MAIZE EARLIER

The other thing that the concept scores highly for is the ability to feed the maize earlier than you would normally.

“Because the grain is so thoroughly pulverised and distributed through the ration, if you’re in the less-than-ideal situation where you have to start feeding maize when it’s still a little bit green, the cows can still process the kernels.”

“We try to have at least two months’ worth of last year’s maize to feed the cows before we get into the fresh-cut crop. But because of logistics that doesn’t always happen. Because the grains are so well processed, although it’s not ideal, you don’t waste the starch you would normally lose when feeding fresh maize.” **CLAAS** 

