



feedback

English Internet edition of the Product Board Animal Feed newsletter - November 2004

“Jointly ensure quality in the supply chain”

Quality requires cooperation in the supply chain and there is not enough of that in the animal sector. That is the opinion of pig farmer and PDV committee member Jan Scholtens.

Jan Scholtens keeps 400 pigs and represents pig farmers on behalf of the Dutch Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture (LTO) on the committee of the Product Board Animal Feed (PDV). In his own business he puts great emphasis on quality assurance. “I try to get the quality of feed up to as high a standard as possible. If you empty out silos as much as you can and blow them clean before new feed goes in, you prevent a build-up of residue feed. The feed bins are always emptied properly too. That way you prevent bacteria and toxins from forming. As a sector we have to give more and more guarantees to our customers. Luckily we can do that as a result of the pairing of IKB (Integrated Chain Management) and GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice). Both view food safety as a key issue.”

Ignorance

Guaranteeing a good product is not something you do alone, however, according to Scholtens. “Nowadays you often see everyone looking at their own components independently to see how they can be guaranteed. We should be doing that jointly within the supply chain. Supply chain coope-

ration should become ingrained for all parties. Food safety has to be guaranteed above all and that can only be done if the entire supply chain strives for quality and comes to mutual agreements about it. The larger compound feed producers are already busy drawing up and tightening terms and conditions of delivery for the supply of raw materials, for example. But the importance of working together has penetrated smaller businesses too.” The PDV can stimulate the importance of cooperation by providing information and holding discussions with the sector about the future. Scholtens: “I miss these discussions. We spend too little time thinking about where we want to be in a few years’ time and which steps have to be taken to achieve this. People are not sufficiently open to new ideas - through fear, but often through ignorance too. If you don’t know where you want to go, you have no security. If you have a clear joint vision, everyone can grow towards it. Then we can start incorporating the highest possible quality guarantees at minimum cost.”

Strength

Better supply chain cooperation according to Scholtens does not stop at the



Jan Scholtens

door of the product boards. “As far as I’m concerned, there should be one animal product board and one vegetable product board. There’s a lot of overlap between all the different product boards. The sector is shrinking which means that the money has to come from fewer and fewer operators. That makes efficiency important. Internationally there is a considerable amount of cooperation with more than 4,900 business locations taking part in GMP+. That shows that there is an international interest in monitoring quality. And it indicates the quality of GMP+. A sign that the product board and other organisations have delivered good work. That should be and remain the strength of the product boards: standing up for the common good and as part of that, guaranteeing food safety.”

Undesirable substances database on-line

The Undesirable Substances and Products Database has recently been made available on-line. This enables companies who supply data for this database to view the results faster and more easily. The database lists the results of the monitoring programmes, for such substances as salmonella or mycotoxins for example, which are being carried out at many locations in the animal feed chain. The database gives participating companies a better insight into the current state of affairs and enables them to adjust their own monitoring programmes on the basis of the information in the database. More information about the database and about participating in it can be found on the website of the Product Board Animal Feed (www.pdv.nl, in language options ENG) under ‘Quality’, ‘Unwanted substances and products’.

Forage trade wants a more practical GMP+

The forage trade is part of the animal feed sector, which means that the GMP+ system applies to this branch too. According to forage merchant Willem Kooter, this quality assurance system certainly brings added value. However, in his opinion, its practicability could be improved.

Kooter applied for a GMP certificate for his business in Hazerswoude-dorp in January 2000. He has now been a holder of a GMP+ certificate since November 2003. Kooter: "I didn't immediately apply for a certificate back then. I first wanted to see what my colleague merchants were doing. Besides, I was hesitant about taking part since I trade in products that don't hold that many risks. I supply hay and straw to riding schools, bulb fields, the pet market, the mushroom industry and to cattle breeders. My feeling was that the GMP+ regulations mainly applied to the compound feed industry."

More care

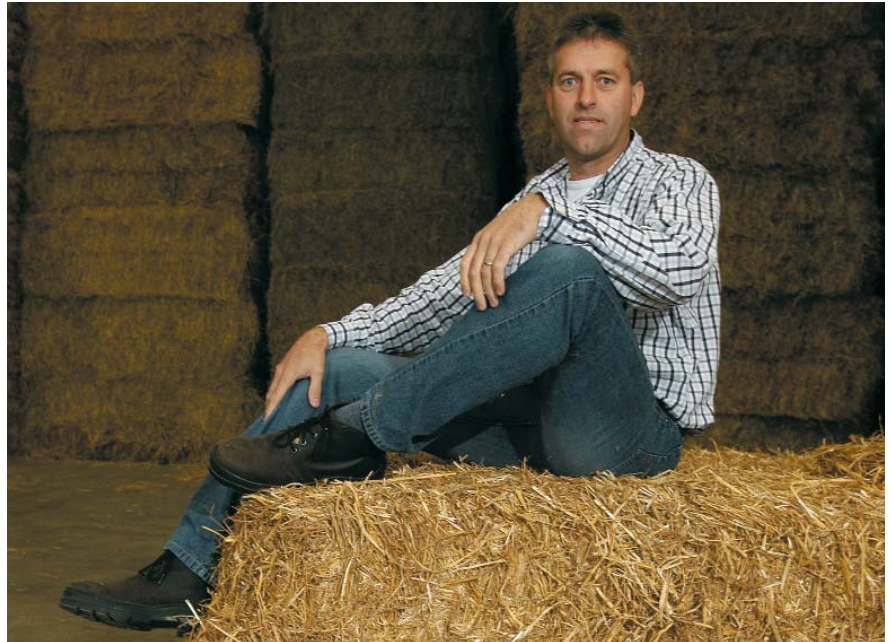
Nonetheless, Kooter applied for a GMP certificate. "Cattle breeders almost only buy from merchants with GMP+ certificates. No GMP+ means you can't deliver. By having GMP+ I'm securing the future of my business and I now think more systematically about quality assurance. I have seven employees, six of whom are drivers. I've noticed that they are now much more aware of what they are doing in their work. They note down all the product data and know what to watch out for and what they have to check. Weather conditions have an enormous effect on straw and hay. The colour is important. Colours and smell can differ, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the product is bad. Thanks to internal GMP+ meetings the drivers know that. Personally I'm now much more careful about what I buy and I make a conscious effort to go and look at products. It means more paperwork for me, but everyone now knows, for instance, what moisture content is allowed in bales of straw. I've also noticed that the suppliers have become more careful. They now have to sign for their product, vouch for its quality. That guarantee gives me confidence about what I'm bringing home."

Taking samples

In 2003 GMP+ was introduced for the forage trade and quality assurance was tightened up with HACCP. Kooter: "Risk analyses and sampling were then

introduced. That's fine, but regulations that are too strict are unworkable. GMP+ could be more practically oriented. I can't check every bale of straw that comes from France or Germany: that takes far too long. It is much handier to check them using systematic sampling. Forage products have never

caused problems and are hardly ever mixed with other products. They need much simpler GMP+ regulations. Putting more trust in taking samples than in written statements, for example. We certainly have to demonstrate that we are dealing in good products, but we don't have to go overboard. Our branch organisation Hisfa is involved in discussions with the Dutch Product Board Animal Feed to set up practical plans and regulations. Luckily we're being given the freedom to do this. It's a good thing. It'll benefit the practicability of GMP+ and consequently quality assurance too."



Willem Kooter

Residual substances

Reusing residual substances in animal feed has major benefits for the environment and the economy, but can also lead to certain risks. Since 1997 the Netherlands has suffered from feed-related scandals roughly once every two years. This concerned contaminations with dioxine (3x), priones (BSE), nitrofen and MPA. In most instances, these substances had entered the feed in the form of residual substances. Foot-and-mouth disease was also caused by residual substances. In this event, the virus penetrated into the European cattle farming industry through a pig farm in Newcastle, where airplane catering waste products were fed to the animals. But even minor incidents can lead to serious economic losses and can damage the industry's image. No wonder that residual substances now have a bad name. No wonder either that the Dutch Lower House and the Dutch food authority VWA have been carrying out research into feed issues. The conclusion of this research is that the industry has already done a great deal to improve the situation, but that there is still a lot to be done. This is one of the conclusions of a study carried out by the SIRNED agency commissioned by the Technology Assessment steering committee, an independent advisory body to the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries.

Partly on the basis of this study, the steering committee has presented recommendations to Minister Veerman*. The six main recommendations out of a total of 20 are:

1. Introduce a red and a green list of feed ingredients.
2. Limit the number of companies allowed to mix feed ingredients.
3. Continue the development of GMP+ in the direction already taken by TrusQ.
4. Do not only grant certificates to companies, but also to chains in the feed industry. (Minister Veerman has already replied that he wants to promote this.)
5. Give a more active role to the processing industries: meat and dairy. Their delivery conditions should contain provisions that their livestock farmers buy their feed from certified companies.

High-quality feed ingredients are not waste

Brewer's grains, beet pulp from sugar factories and steamed potato peel from the chips and crisp industry are just some of the products from the foodstuffs industry that are used as high-quality ingredients in the animal feed sector. However, formally these products can be designated as waste. A recommendation to the Dutch Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality is intended to stop this.

For feed producers it is important that high-quality ingredients are not considered as waste substances, because otherwise producers will be under the obligation to report to the environmental authorities as waste processors. This will result in troublesome record keeping with the associated costs. Animal feed companies will then have to deal with two supervising bodies in the same area, i.e. environmental and animal feed inspectorates. Furthermore, the designation 'waste substance' does not benefit the image of the producers either. The products have suddenly become waste substances, making them less attractive to buyers at home and abroad, which might harm the sector economically. The government and the animal feed sector are currently mapping bottlenecks and solutions. This will be compiled into a joint recommendation report which will be presented to the Dutch Minister of Agriculture. The report is expected to be ready in November. At that time it will also become clear which definition will be used in future.



Beet pulp

Better feed to improve breeding sow welfare

Fatteners grow faster than ever due to selection for speed of growth. A high voluntary feed intake is an important factor. Breeding sows are also inclined to consume copious amounts of feed, with the negative effect of causing fatty degeneration and poorer reproduction results. However, limiting the feed offered to breeding sows produces welfare problems. Studies have discovered the solution.

If breeding sows are allowed unlimited access to feed, they become far too fat and their fertility is negatively affected.

To prevent this, only limited amounts of feed are dispensed to these pigs. This results in their consuming less than they would really like and feeling hungry all the time. This hungry sensation causes stress and abnormal behaviour, such as 'vacuum chewing' and biting their pen bars. This behaviour conflicts with the desired levels of animal welfare strived for by the animal feed sector. Partly on the initiative of the Product Board Animal Feed, research has been carried out into a feed composition that will satisfy the sensation of hunger, without allowing sows to become too fat. High-fibre feed was supposed to be the solution. For a number of years legislation demands that high-fibre feed (roughage) must also be fed to sows without piglets. In addition, special 'well-being feed', containing plenty of fibre-rich ingredients, was developed for pregnant sows five years ago. However, continued research has shown that not all fibres reduce the hungry sensation. Fibres that do ease hunger have been found to be degrad-



able by bacteria inside the large gut, i.e. they are fermentable. This insight allows the production of better welfare feed: feed that meets the nutritional requirements and alleviates the hungry sensation leaving sows feeling satisfied and ending abnormal behaviour. Hunger and stress will disappear and the sow's well-being will be greatly improved. Livestock farmers interested in buying well-being feed can contact their feed suppliers.

6. Make aspects such as feed quality and safety transparent. Develop a grading system against which feed producers and chains can be scored.



Publish a list of the safest and the least safe suppliers every year.

Such a system will improve the overall performance, encourage poor performers to improve and reward leading companies. Then the market will no longer only focus on the lowest prices, but also on the best and safest feed. We do not think that we can fully prevent feed-related scandals this way, but we do think that this may help to gradually diminish their extent and frequency. And then we will be happy to reuse residual substances again.

Wouter van der Weijden

Chairman of the Technology Assessment steering committee

* The report and the recommendations can be ordered from beadegroot@clm.nl

On 5 October the Product Board Animal Feed and the Animal Sciences Group held a theme meeting on sow welfare where topics such as the research results and the economic consequences of welfare feed for livestock farmers were discussed. All topics can be found in the Dutch language section of www.pdv.nl under 'Onderzoek', 'Nieuws'.

Clarity about mycotoxins

There has been clarity as to the permissible quantities of mycotoxins in agricultural products since 1 September, the day when the standards and analysis methods for determining the presence of the mycotoxins DON, Zearalenon and Ochratoxine A were laid down as part of the GMP regulations.

When livestock farmers buy agricultural products for further processing from their crop farming neighbour, a feed compounder or a merchant, this may lead to problems as these products may contain mycotoxins, without the buyer or the seller being aware of this contamination. Mycotoxins are fungi which develop during cultivation and which may produce harmful toxic substances in agricultural products.

If the product, after having been processed into feed, causes complaints in the animal, the cause of the problems has to be examined. This used to be quite hard, since there were no official standards for mycotoxins and accurate measurement was not possible. However, since 1 September standards as well as reliable analysis methods have been available. The standards and methods were



The Product Board Animal Feed uses the GMP+ system to facilitate an animal feed quality guarantee worthy of HACCP throughout the entire chain, from raw material to transport and livestock farming. Inspection and certification are carried out by independent organisations.

developed after the industry asked the Product Board Animal Feed to produce standards and measuring techniques for mycotoxins in 2001. In collaboration with the sector and experts, the product board made an inventory of the exact operation of the toxic agents and possible methods of analysis. This resulted in a report showing the consequences of the presence of mycotoxins, giving methods of analysis and recommendations for permissible quantities. The report shows that mycotoxins endanger public health and have adverse effects on animal health.

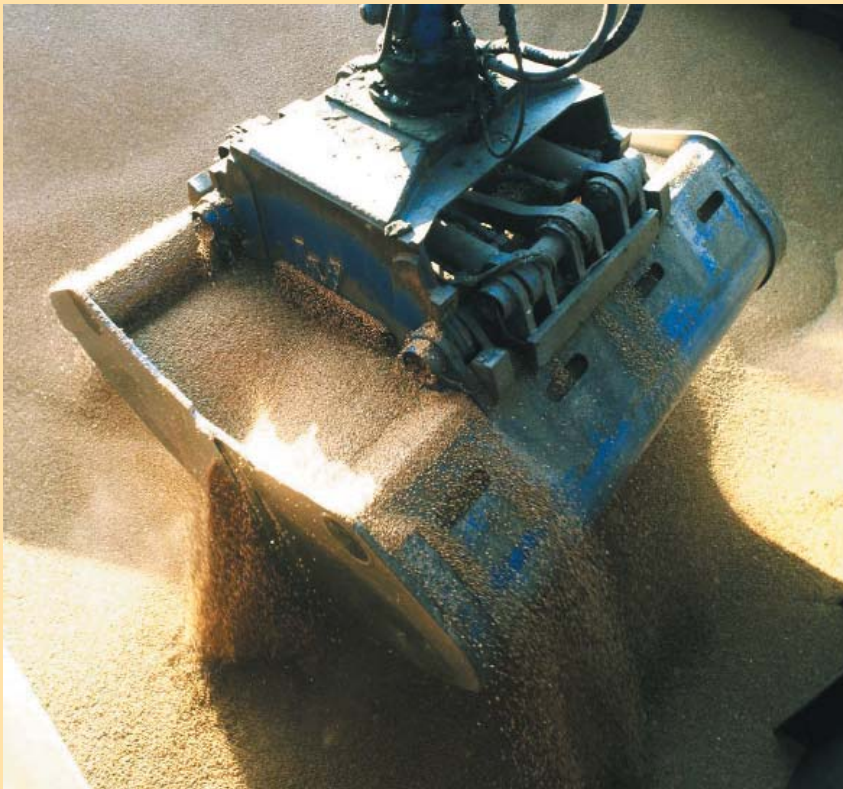
Laboratories

Early in 2004 reliable methods of analysis were made available, after seven laboratories had demonstrated their ability to apply these methods. The standards became effective under GMP+ on 1 September 2004 and a list has been drawn up of laboratories which can carry out the analyses. This has put the Dutch animal feed sector in the lead in the EU regarding mycotoxin control. The report with standards, methods of analysis and approved laboratories can be found on www.pdv.nl, under 'Quality', 'Publications', 'Quality series', 'Nr 96'.

New GMP standard for inland navigation

Early this year a new GMP standard was laid down for the transport of feed-stuffs, premixes and compound feed by inland navigation. A new aspect of this standard is that inland navigation freighters and/or customers must be GMP certified.

By customers the Product Board Animal Feed also includes feed compounders and trading companies who take care of their own freighting. As of 1 January 2005 freighters who work for GMP-certified companies must comply with the GMP standard. Customers will be obliged to comply with this standard from 1 March 2005. This timeline has been coordinated with Ovocom, the Belgian controlling body for the GMP scheme to ensure that introduction of GMP certification in the Netherlands and Belgium takes place at the same time.



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