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## MYCOTOXIN CONTAMINATION OF FEEDSTUFFS CONTINUES TO PUT COW HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE AT RISK

Ingestion of the mycotoxins found in contaminated feedstuffs can cut daily milk yields by 2-3 litres/cow, increase cell counts and mastitis, lower milk quality and reduce fertility. According to Dr Derek McIlmoyle, AB Vista's GB & Ireland Technical Director, the problem is also far more widespread than most milk producers realise.

"The most common mycotoxins affecting British and Irish dairy herds are produced by *Fusarium* moulds," he states. "Poorly consolidated or sealed areas in silage clamps are prime sites for this aerobic mould growth, as are open clamp faces and dry feeds that are allowed to get even slightly damp."

Any discolouration generally indicates the presence of aerobic spoilage, with visible mould growth an indication that mycotoxins could be present. But even where spoilage isn't visible to the naked eye, moulds and mycotoxins may still be present, Dr McIlmoyle warns.

"With a recent survey showing that 89% of maize silages, 67% of whole crop silages and 71% of TMRs tested positive for mycotoxins, it's no surprise that yields typically respond by 2-3 litres/cow/day when a mycotoxin deactivator like Ultrasorb is included in the ration," he highlights. "There's

also been research using dairy heifers that showed conception rates fell from 87% to 62% where significant mycotoxin contamination was present.

"So never feed obviously mouldy feed or forage to any livestock, regularly clean away and discard feed refusals, and ensure the ration isn't heating in front of the cows. It's also important to store moist feeds under plastic to exclude air, use a regularly sharpened shear grab to minimise air penetration into silage clamps and always keep dry feeds free of moisture, whether from leaking roofs, yard run-off or contamination with moist feeds or silage."

ends

**Notes to editor:**

AB Vista is a leading global supplier of micro-ingredients for the animal feed industry.

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