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MAXIMISING DIETARY FIBRE DIGESTIBILITY CRITICAL TO DAIRY AND BEEF PRODUCTIVITY THIS WINTER

Many rations are underperforming compared to expectations this winter thanks to lower quality grass silages and potentially higher levels of dietary fibre. Maximising energy release from this fibre is therefore critical if livestock are to extract as much production as possible from the rations being fed, claims Dr Nicola Walker, AB Vista's Ruminant Product Development Manager.

"Fibre is an essential component in ruminant diets, both as an energy source and for correct rumen function, but it's also the slowest digesting fraction," she states.

"It means that anything which improves fibre digestibility has a massive impact on overall feed efficiency, and the milk or growth achieved from all feeds, not just forage."

Under ideal conditions, the rumen digestibility of plant cell walls – the main source of fibre in the diet – is typically around 65%. But that figure can drop to as low as 35% if low rumen pH (acidosis), increased outflow rates (sodium bicarbonate) or delayed microbial attachment and colonisation (excess dietary oil) restrict fibre digesting microbial activity.

“Correctly formulating rations to minimise rumen pH fluctuations, retain fibre in the rumen and ensure fibre is available for digestion will be critical this winter,” Dr Walker explains.

“Recent research has also shown that total mixed ration (TMR) digestibility can be raised from 63% to 67% by reducing the time before digestion in the rumen begins.

“Achieved by applying the fibre pre-treatment VistaPre-T prior to feeding – which roughens the surface of the fibre to speed microbial colonisation – the result was a significant gain in overall feed efficiency, leading to a 4-5% increase in milk yield or beef liveweight gain.”

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Notes to editor:

AB Vista is an animal nutrition technology company offering pioneering products and technical services to the global animal feed industry. Since its establishment in 2004, AB Vista has grown to be a top-three player in feed enzymes and is also one of the largest suppliers of natural betaine to the global animal nutrition industry. The company invests heavily in research and development and has a growing portfolio of products and services spanning the poultry, swine, ruminant and aquaculture sectors. AB Vista is headquartered in the UK, with regional offices located in the USA, Brazil, Singapore, Spain, India, China, Germany and Finland.

AB Vista is part of AB Agri, the agricultural division of Associated British Foods, one of Europe's largest food & retail companies with a market capitalisation of £26 billion.

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