

## No 151: Feeding Frozen Sugar Beet

### Feeding Frozen Sugar Beet

The winter freeze-thaw conditions have resulted in an estimated 600,000 tonnes of sugar beet left rotting in fields and deteriorating in clamps. The majority of this crop is believed to be not fit to process. It may therefore be offered as spoilt beet for livestock feeding.

**Is this advisable?** A review of the literature and contact with Nutreco colleagues in countries which commonly face these issues has resulted in the conclusion that the feeding of this type of spoilt beet is not advised. Not only can it have a detrimental effect on performance, but it can also have an effect on animal health.

The key points to note are:

- As a result of the beet being frozen then thawed, the cell walls become ruptured and the beet releases the intra-cellular sugar which can lead to a major disturbance of rumen fermentation and severe acidosis.
- As with all fodder crops, beet being fed should be free from soil contamination due to the risk of clostridia infection.
- Mouldy beets must not be fed due to the risk of mycotoxins and their potential impact on performance, health & fertility.
- If feeding of the beet itself is unavoidable, feed only clean, mould-free beets and limit intakes to cattle starting at 1kg DM per head per day and assess the impact on performance and health.

- If sugar beet tops have to be fed, they should be wilted and preferably ensiled prior to use.
- Feeding rates of beet tops should not exceed 10kg/h/day for cattle and 3kg/h/day for sheep. Higher rates will result in scouring due to the laxative effect of the oxalic acid present in the beet tops.
- As the oxalic acid binds with calcium, extra calcium has to be supplied within the ration to ensure that requirements are being met.
- Due to the risk of milk taint, feed beet tops at least 4 hours before milking.

Further information can be obtained from the Frank Wright Trow technical department on 01335 341102. Receive these technical publications directly via e-mail link.

Contact Sarah Brandrick to register your interest on 01335 341128 or at [sarah.brandrick@frankwright.com](mailto:sarah.brandrick@frankwright.com). You can also access this and past CONTACT and URGENT NEWS publications by registering on our website: [www.frankwrighttrow.com](http://www.frankwrighttrow.com)