

# Promar matters

providing food for thought

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# Welcome to the latest edition of Promar Matters

At the end of last year, NFU president Minette Batters stated that British Farming is set to begin a 'new era' in 2021. It's an agreeable statement and one that certainly holds great truth.

Since the start of 2021, we've seen new developments in the form of a sustainable farming incentive pilot, a detailed report evaluating animal welfare and an exit payment scheme. Not to mention some of the more unexpected challenges and events, including a notable rise in feed prices and some severe weather patterns.

As Minette commented, there will 'undoubtedly be twists and turns' in this new journey but there is no better time to excel and to ensure farming can thrive for generations to come.

To overcome these new challenges and to ensure success going forward, agility is key. This comes down to both personal resilience and business resilience. Farm managers/owners need the personal ability and training required to cope in an age of uncertainty, and their farm should be structured so it's able to withstand shocks.

There is now a duty to commit to, and drive, change. This is not a one-man job. Strong leadership is critical, but any manager needs a good system of support to help look at the business and to give them the courage to develop. Yes, there is a big job to be done. However, with knowledge, strategy and resilience on their side, we truly believe any farm business can excel no matter what obstacles are thrown in the way.

We remain to support you and your business on this journey through change. If you have any questions or need advice around the areas discussed in this issue, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

**Neil Adams, Managing Director**

# How resilient is your farm business to climate impacts?

Can your farm cope with whatever the weather throws at it, while still turning a profit? Generations of farmers have had to contemplate this question, but the answer has never been more important than it is today.

You only have to look at the last 5 years to see how we have been impacted by extreme and unpredictable weather. Our work with agricultural industry partners points to the fact that farmers and growers now need to deal with:

- Increased temperatures
- Changes in levels and distribution of seasonal rainfall
- High winter wind speed
- More extreme weather events

These impacts have been reinforced in the National Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) reports produced by DEFRA. In respect of agriculture, the risk assessment identified further challenges which will affect farmers including:

- Reduced crop (yield) production
- Livestock health and welfare – due to heat stress
- Soils – erosion and nutrient depletion
- Flooding
- Susceptibility to water resources
- Risks posed by pests/diseases

As you can see, this level of unpredictability brings with it a great urgency to be robust. Farmers now need to be supported to understand climate change, consider opportunities to adapt to change and develop a clear approach to weather extremities that incorporates resilience.

## How can your business start to plan, mitigate and adapt?

While each farm is different and will require its 'own plan' that is adapted to its topography, natural assets and challenges, there are a set of actions which can support mitigation. The following diagram offers some examples of measures that can be taken to ensure the UK has a safe and secure food future.

## Adapting to change and improving resilience

### Changing practice to maximise yields

### Improved water consumption and use: (e.g. water harvesting, water capture and re-use, and on-farm storage)

### Improving irrigation techniques to improve water efficiency during dry spells

### Implementing high impact, rotational (mob) grazing, long recovery periods to support nature and habitat regeneration

### Integrate conservation agriculture practices

### Changes in livestock production cycles (e.g. introduction of autumn lambing and calving)

### Planting of trees to provide shade for livestock and windbreaks for crops

### Enhancing carbon storage in biomass by creating new woodlands

### Reducing disturbance of soils

### Investing in renewable technology

### Improving efficiency of nutrient use by matching use with need and reducing wastage/ emissions

### Changing livestock diet to reduce emissions of methane ( $\text{CH}_4$ ) and nitrous oxide ( $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ )

### Improving manure and slurry storage

To consider one of these actions in more detail, let's look at soils and reducing risks in losing such a critical resource.

Building soil organic matter will help with both soil moisture retention and counteracting dampness. Planting cover crops like radish or vetches over winter and ploughing them back in prior to maize drilling will help build organic matter and soil structure. Not to mention, the benefit on crop yields.

These overwintered crops will not only deal with the immediate challenges of soil erosion and nutrient uptake but, during wetter months, will help to improve drainage. Where possible the use of minimum cultivation and/or basic soil repair methods should enable less soil disturbance, soil erosion and nutrient loss when establishing the crop.

The humble earthworm shouldn't be forgotten either. As an 'ecosystem engineer' they can turn trash and crop debris into readily available plant nutrients and create pathways for drainage. A unique, but valuable companion when it comes to building resilient soil.

## Test, measure, monitor and improve

Finding ways to build resilience is fundamental to managing the climate challenge on farms. Before you jump into any one solution, we encourage you to think about whether you could run pilots on particularly vulnerable areas of the farm to see what difference you could make.



The ability to compare your farm pre and post solution will demonstrate the impact of it on your business. This'll put you in good stead going forward; after all, it is those who are informed, prepared and adapt efficiently who will stride ahead.

**Dulcie Parcell, Environmental Consultant**



# Make planning and budgeting a business priority

**We may have seen the back of 2020, but now is not the time to sit back and turn a blind eye to change. The agricultural industry is still facing significant challenges which will affect how farm businesses perform.**

- We are still trying to understand the impact of Brexit on businesses with the effect of labour supply and new trade deals.
- Farming methods will have to evolve to meet the demands to move to net zero carbon and continue to improve animal welfare
- We have the total redesign of support payments and in the immediate term extreme volatility in commodity feed markets

What can you do to adapt and make your farm business more resilient? It requires forward planning and using that to take appropriate action when necessary. If you don't know where you're going, how do you know what to do when you get there?

The first step is to budget. After all, you need to develop a more informed risk management strategy. The information gathered will allow you to make educated decisions to reduce risk and take advantage of opportunities. It'll also help benchmark your performance. That's not all you need to think about. We've listed some other steps that should be taken for effective business planning and budgeting:

**1**

Review and refine your personal and business goals including succession. What do you want from the business and where do you want it to be?

**2**

Develop a realistic budget of current performance to understand how well the system meets your goals. There is no point basing a plan on 10000 litres per cow if you only produce 8500 litres. Benchmark current performance to identify improvement opportunities.

**3**

Stress test your plan. How well would you cope with changes such as an increase in feed prices, a decline in forage quality and/or quantity, a fall in milk prices, an increase in interest rates and so on?

**4**

Consider changes to the system. What would be the impact of changes to the scale or nature of operations, using your initial plan as the base for this? Do you need to develop the skills base of your people to achieve this?

**5**

Challenge every cost. If you always buy high protein blends; could more of your protein come from the farm? Controlling and monitoring fixed costs can be an effective method for increasing profit. Are you with the most cost effective supplier or should you consider simply switching energy supplier, for example.

**6**

Think outside the box. Could you diversify to create new income streams? When considering any diversification opportunity, ask yourself if you have the skills, resources and commitment to make it work or would it take you away from your other responsibilities? It is about striking the right balance and creating the best possible business model.

**7**

Review your debt financing. Is it the most suitable for your objectives?

**8**

Share the plans with all stakeholders so that you get their support. Encourage them to challenge your assumptions and decisions.

**9**

Don't hide your plan away in a drawer and forget it. Regularly review it to see how effective it is and to allow you to revise as required. Promar MilkMinder and Farm Business Accounts are ideal tools for regular monitoring of physical and financial performance.

**10**

Remember that you are not on your own. Our consultants are experienced in working with farm businesses across the country, helping them to build resilience into their plans. Our data systems allow a unique level of benchmarking and comparative analysis to help set a robust plan, and then to keep you on track.

**Ben Canning, Farm Business Consultant**



# Meeting consumer expectations of animal welfare

**To be successful, every business now needs to provide its customers with reassurance and confidence in not just the quality of the product it wishes to sell, but also the methods by which it has been produced. Increasingly for supply chains which incorporate a livestock farming business, that reassurance is being sought in respect of the welfare of all the animals connected to that chain.**

In part, this emphasis is being driven by evolving legislation and recommendations as witnessed in the recent 57-page report by DEFRA's Animal Welfare Committee titled "Opinion on the Welfare of Cattle in Different Production Systems" or the recently introduced Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, but we can't ignore the increasingly powerful influence being propelled by consumers and commercial interests.

## Heightened awareness:

Digital communication, especially social media has heightened the awareness and curiosity of many consumers about what happens on farms producing the food they eat. These modern communication methods have given a voice to consumers to praise or denigrate animal welfare practices in an instant, to a mass audience and with it, to all parties connected to that supply chain.

Consequently, for a significant number of retailers and food processors, improved animal welfare and traceability is now an important part of their sourcing strategy. A bad news exposé creates too much risk to maintaining customer confidence.

Farm businesses are a vital part of this challenge. As a livestock farmer, it's about being resilient and having the capabilities to keep up with consumer demand. While this may seem like an overwhelming challenge, in reality it requires small, yet incremental changes.

## Mindset:

If not doing so already, then start to see high animal welfare as an opportunity. The good news is that this is something customers want and that the vast majority of UK farms already achieve or with limited change, can achieve. Two and two should therefore make four and lead to a win/win relationship providing value to both parties.

## Engagement and Communication:

As far as meeting customer needs, Sir Richard Branson is quoted as saying that "the key is to set realistic expectations and not just to meet them, but to exceed them, preferably in unexpected and helpful ways". This means leading the conversation about animal welfare, not following it. It also means listening as well as telling. Take time to fully understand what the customer is thinking as well as explaining the practicalities of livestock farming to the customer. A good starting point here is to invite your milk or meat buyer to walk round your farm, and to share opinions and views.

## Self-assessment:

When was the last time you conducted and documented a thorough SWOT analysis of your own animal welfare practices? Not least in terms of the upcoming opportunities and threats.

## Investment:

Many businesses will evaluate the merits of investment through filters of the likely financial return on the investment, saved time, improved consistency of product, improved operator safety and well-being, environmental impact or a reduction in waste. However, how many would also consider the impact of any investment on improved animal welfare? Using an "animal welfare lens", it's important to evaluate what the consumers view of your investment would be?

Let's not forget that as the world evolves, so does the consumer. The customer of tomorrow does not necessarily hold the same expectation or have the same buying considerations as yesterday's customer. The question you have to ask yourself is, how close is the way I produce my milk or meat to meeting that evolving expectation?

**Nigel Davies, Manager of Farm Consulting, Northern Region**



# Lead yourself first, and your business leadership will follow

**You can't lead others until you know how to truly lead yourself. But, how many of you put that in to practice on a day-to-day basis? We may exert great energy into keeping our business and staff afloat, but minimal thought or action often goes into how we, as individuals, are coping and adapting to change.**

This could be detrimental to our businesses. As a leader, every feeling and emotion is going to inevitably reflect on the performance of those who work around us and our business. If we're not leading ourselves to a successful mindset and achieving emotional stability, how can we expect our business and staff to do the same?

Holly Beckett is passionate about the development of people and how that ties in with business growth. Holly is the fourth generation of a West Midlands farming family. She undertook a Nuffield Farming Scholarship in 2015 looking at practical applications that can be introduced for business growth through the development of people. In 2017, Holly launched Focused Farmers with Willie Horton, a psychologist and leadership consultant.

The initiative mentors farmers and agricultural-sector workers and helps them to understand the value of self-leadership, as well as developing their ability to focus and take charge of their own state of mind.

I spoke to Holly about the value in leadership development and why personal growth leads to business growth.

**I thought it's only fitting to start by asking why people derail and fail to achieve success, whether that be through stress or frustration? Is it something that is deeply rooted within all of us, or is it perhaps the environment we're in?**

"The short answer would be that we stand in our own way and often give in before the whole race is run. While I would say that stress is a very personal thing and it's important to identify what our own stress factors are, we are all wired in a similar way and stress is going to impact everyone at some point in their lives. If this gets out of control, it can limit us.

Poor self-leadership can stem from our own limiting beliefs about our capabilities - 'No, I'm not good enough at this', 'I'm not able to achieve that' - rather than thinking, what can I do to be better? We create our own stress and it's too easy to get wrapped up in the small details and not stop to look at the bigger picture. Worse than that, people don't take the time to evaluate where they are and where they're heading, and if you don't know that - how can you lead?"

**Where do you think that comes from? I know we're all guilty of putting ourselves down, but it's hard to pinpoint whether it's built within us or it's an attitude that has evolved.**

"You're absolutely right, it has evolved. This comes from our cave-dwelling ancestors, whose one aim of the day was to go and gather food and then make it back to the camp alive. They needed to be on guard and prepared for an attack from a predator, as a result they were never fully concentrated on the task in hand.

Our mind became wired to be distracted and not really pay full attention to our lives. It's been conditioned to save the attention part of the brain for if we were attacked, where it could spring into action with a stress response to either fight the predator or run away.

This stress response is physically and mentally draining. Put that into perspective in the 21st century, where we are being startled by constant change and distractions, and it's easy to see why we can feel overwhelmed."

**That's really interesting and I think valuable to know when it comes to dealing with stressful scenarios. It's perhaps about taking a step back and evaluating the situation? Having that self-awareness to control our actions?**

"Yes, and the ability to step back is a really great leadership quality. It boils down to having control of your state of mind and being present in the moment. You'll pay more attention to the people you're engaging with or the task you're completing and not the chitter-chatter that's going on in your head, which is often unnecessary thought.

A prelude to this is being able to assess when you're getting stressed and worked up and then making the choice to change your behaviour – that too shows great self-leadership and resilience."

**How do you think that ties into running a farm? It's a stressful, chaotic environment...**

"There's a lot of uncertainty in agriculture and we don't know how things are going to evolve. But, if you can take the right action at the right moment, then you won't get knocked out of your zone.

This can be achieved by being focused. If you're doing a job and you're thinking about the next five jobs you've got to do, then you're not giving your full attention to the current job. That's completely pointless and not getting anything done effectively.

If you are getting stressed, then remove yourself from the situation. It only takes two minutes to take charge of your state of mind. It's easier said than done, but training your mind through meditation or mental exercise will help you press that reset button to let go and begin again.

And if you have days where you're not feeling motivated, don't beat yourself up about it. It's not going to help you to move forward."

**If we ignore ourselves, and forget to lead ourselves to success, what do you think the implications are? I imagine it's going to have an impact on your staff, running the business or even your family relationships?**

"Yes, absolutely. 99% of the time, if a leader of a farm business has a problem then it is a reflection of them and how they're behaving. They're creating a negative cycle that is going to hinder workflow for everyone.

It's also important to look at how self-leadership will impact you. I recently asked a group of five farmers 'what was the one next action they would take to achieve their goal' and the response was, 'meditate daily, operate more in the present, get my bike out, spend more focused time with my family and write down my life vision'.

Self-care practices are a huge contribution to achieving success. When people recognise this and start to take each moment in their stride with clarity and clear direction, they become more efficient, effective and move beyond resilience."

To learn more about Holly Beckett and to download a free 12-part series on the psychology and neuroscience of developing mindfulness for focus, visit [www.focussedfarmers.com](http://www.focussedfarmers.com)

**Neil Adams, Managing Director**



# Don't switch off when it comes to **farm safety**

**Farmers and farm workers are exposed to the effects of change on a daily basis. Whether that be the introduction of new technology and machinery, a revision in regulations, the unpredictability of the weather or even the evolving generations contributing to the working day.**

Undoubtedly some of these are positive developments, but they all still come with their own risks. Farming is a hazardous industry, and this is only heightened when new scenarios and people are added to the equation. When evaluating how change will affect the running of your farm, you shouldn't just be thinking about your profit or your produce.

The implications on health and safety needs to be a key priority. It's about adopting a new mindset and putting risk managing procedures in place to protect against any unplanned or unexpected events.

## We can't ignore the fatality statistics!

You may be thinking that health and safety is already at the forefront of your agenda. Yet, we only have to look at the figures to realise the dangers involved in farming. Agriculture has the worst rate of worker injuries (per 100,000) of the main industrial sectors, with a rate eighteen times as high as the average rate across all industries.<sup>1</sup>

You should be evaluating if you're truly doing enough to ensure the safety of your employees, family and even yourself. Don't see it as a barrier to progression! Health and safety is about doing what you want to do but doing it safely.



## Conduct regular meetings

Every two months, at least, you should be addressing health and safety in your team meetings. It needs to be put at the top of your agenda and should evaluate any newly identified hazards or changes on farm. Make it the responsibility of one team member to walk around the entire premises prior to the meeting, to evaluate any areas or equipment that need attention.

## Prioritise training and skills

Not only should every current member of the team follow a recognised standard of formal training and be up to date with their relevant licenses, but new staff must be put through a proper induction process. Do you tell them where everything is, including the phone, fire assembly point and emergency contact numbers? They may seem like small things, but they will be essential should an accident occur.

## Displaying key contact details

In order to offer an informative induction for new staff, you need to make sure that you have the right processes in place. Is your emergency contingency plan up to date? Are all relevant contact details fully displayed in a prominent area? It's recommended to display this in a dry and central place, such as the office.

Don't forget visitors. Signage with clear directions on where to park and what they should do upon arrival needs to be a priority, particularly on larger farms where there is a greater number of people and machinery moving about.

## Maintenance for machinery

All farm machinery must be properly maintained, with all moving parts properly fitted with undamaged guards. Adequate training is essential too, especially with the introduction of advanced machines. We're all guilty of not reading the instructions, but this could be a vital step towards avoiding a fatal incident.



When purchasing new or second-hand machinery, make sure to also read up about any new laws in relation to manufacturing and supply.

## Ensuring farm safety for all ages

It's important to identify the risks that all workers and visitors face.

## Half of the workers killed in 2019/20 were 55 years or older with the youngest person killed a 4-year-old child.<sup>1</sup>

Farms can be a wonderful place for families and children, with one generation proud to be showing the next generation the ropes. We must never forget, however, that with these new experiences and learnings comes greater risk. It's time to talk openly, with everyone, about safety and make it a priority across all aspects of the farm.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hse.gov.uk/agriculture/resources/fatal.htm>

**Mark Rouse, Farm Business Consultant**

# Are you getting the most out of your milking parlour?

**Regular maintenance of the milking parlour is often seen as a tick box exercise to meet the requirements of farm assurance. In an era of change, it's time to adjust this mindset and recognise the greater value in parlour testing.**

Let's look at animal welfare and the safe use of antibiotics. While we've seen great improvement in this area over recent years, there are undoubtedly going to be new targets to reach in the future. Targets that'll demand efficiency and unavoidable change on farm. Creating a resilient milking system will be an essential part of this journey - it's about focusing on prevention instead of treatment.

## So, how do you do this?

First and foremost, you need to get to the heart of your milking process and identify where improvements can be made; including the interactions between the milking machine, the cow and the operator. A dynamic milking test will give a detailed insight into how all three interact. Not to mention, it provides the opportunity for an experienced pair of eyes to check the many factors that contribute to an efficient milking.

This includes whether correct pre-milking preparation has been exercised to ensure speedy let down; the degree of under/over milking, and whether milk flooding in the claw and tubing is

adversely affecting the teat-end vacuum. These are all key factors to consider when it comes to improving cow health.

Staff are another huge asset to assess. It is not unusual to see a short number of operators trying to cope with a long row of cows in the parlour, particularly in the face of labour shortages. Rather than working with 5-6 cows at a time, they will be carrying out the preparation routine and then leaving cows for too long before attaching the clusters.

**A delay of 60-90 seconds between udder preparation and putting the unit on has been shown to be the most efficient, increasing milk harvested per hour by up to 17%.**

Over milking can also occur if the rows of cows are left too long to be managed in a timely fashion. Maybe there are no ACRs or perhaps they are set incorrectly, which is more often the case. Either way, an extra 30 seconds per milking adds up to 300 minutes of painful, unnecessary additional milking every lactation. Leaving clusters on for too long can cause serious teat-end damage again leaving the cow prone to mastitis infections.

Essentially, it's about trying to find the optimum routine for the number of milkers, the parlour size and the cows being milked.

## Take steps to reduce mastitis; one of the most debilitating diseases on dairy farms

To reduce mastitis in your parlour you need to pay attention to your routine. Use appropriate pre and post dip chemicals and ensure the vacuum level and the ACRs are set appropriately for your system.

Don't forget that mastitis can be categorised into two types. Contagious mastitis, which is commonly spread in the parlour and environmental mastitis, which is influenced by housing conditions. To identify the predominant mastitis infection pattern on your farm, consider using the AHDB pattern analysis tool.

## A unified approach

To move forward, we need to have a clearer and more succinct approach to milking. Let's move the focus away from how long it takes and more towards the target of improved mastitis, a reduction in antibiotics and maximum cow welfare. On an individual farm basis, identifying opportunities for improvement and making some simple changes can go a long way towards achieving this.

**Simon Browning,  
Parlour Consultant**





The following are extracts from our website blog, where Promar staff discuss the major issues facing UK farming. For the full articles and the complete range of blog posts, go to [www.promar-international.com/blogs](http://www.promar-international.com/blogs)

## FACE UP TO FEED PRICE HIKES

Monitoring markets and taking action to mitigate volatility is an important skill for business resilience. Let's take feed prices, as an example. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that high feed prices are likely to remain in the coming months and without taking action, these costs will put pressure on margins.

The price of all major feed commodities is higher than 12 months ago, and the variable first cut grass silages will mean demand for some feeds will continue to be particularly high. It is possible these increases could result in a margin reduction of 1.5 pence per litre.

What can you do to mitigate increased purchased feed costs? With feed prices largely outside your direct control, this is an opportunity to review feed strategies. Challenge what is being fed to your cows to optimise milk production and protect margins.

We think there are several areas where greater focus could improve your herd's diet and optimise feed costs.

### 1 – Tackle protein

Farms using good quality silage can challenge protein levels and get positive results. By maximising forage intakes, you'll need less supplementary protein and can consider using non-protein nitrogen alternatives such as urea. Research suggests overall protein levels in diets can be cut too.

### 2 – Increase forage intakes

Encourage your cows to achieve even higher forage intakes. Look at improving the time cows have access to feed, trough space and access to water. Take the time to think about the stocking rate in your shed to minimise standing times and optimise feed intakes.

Challenge cow feeding in the parlour/out of parlour feeding, especially with late lactation cows.

### 3 – Find the relative feed value

To ensure value for money, select purchased forages and compounds based on their relative feed value.

It is a simple calculation, working out the price per unit of nutrient. For example, £/% of protein or £/ MJ ME of the feeds available. This is an area where sound independent advice can help as there is no conflict of interest in recommending best value for money feeds.

### 4 – Maximise home-grown forage production

Grazed grass is over 75% less expensive than concentrate and can have the single biggest impact on feed costs. Early turnout, maximised intakes and good re-growth are all attainable if you plan carefully to get more from your grazing platform.

You may need to improve the grazing infrastructure and consider building tracks and troughs. There is also a need to carefully target and manage grass covers and the residuals after grazing.



### 5 – Improve forage quality

There is growing evidence that multi-cut systems result in better silage quality and no reduction in total yield. This means total grass silage productivity is increased. Focussing on cutting younger grass will improve digestibility and nutrient density.

Test pre-cut grass before every cut to help ensure the crop is harvested at the optimum time.

### 6 – Cut forage waste

Fill the clamp fast but evenly, with no air pockets and roll every load. When the clamp is opened, effective face management is essential to reduce aerobic spoilage, so using a block cutter and moving across the face quickly will be essential to reduce losses.

### Don't panic

A high feeder will feel the pain more than those with a low feed use system. A farmer feeding at 0.4Kg/l will have double the increase in feed costs of one feeding at 0.2Kg/l. On the other side of the coin, the potential for savings is much greater with high feed use. Our evidence from working with top 25% performers, ranked on feed costs, shows they

spend 3.8 pence per litre less on purchased feed than the bottom 25%. This demonstrates there are opportunities on most farms to mitigate the impacts of feed price hikes.

### Jonathan Hill

Principal Farm Business Consultant



## NURTURING OUR NATIVE BREEDS

Native breeds farmed in the right place, at the right density, could have a big role to play in our farming future. From farm parks outwintering Highland cattle on resting crop rotations to dairy herds overcoming prohibitive concentrate costs with Northern Dairy Shorthorns, the practical opportunities are there.

As consumers in the UK strive for more food product and service options, the narrative around native breed conservation can be used as a fantastic marketing opportunity to showcase your business too.

The key concept isn't to think of globalised and native livestock as being against each other, but to think of them as complementary to one another. They should both come together to provide diverse food supply chains that'll benefit the producer, the consumer and the environment.

### George Pearn

Graduate Management Trainee



## SLURRY MANAGEMENT – WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED

Slurry management has always been a difficult and contentious topic. The bad news is that legislation is going to get tougher and more effort will be applied by authorities to ensure rules are enforced.

One area that requires specific attention is the slurry and digestate covers market, with it expected to be mandatory for slurry to be covered by 2027. The detailed work we've done in this area, and the research that is being undertaken, alerts us to how much there is to consider and why guidance is a useful tool to development.

There are a variety of slurry and digestate storage options available, which depend on local parameters. When it comes to selecting the most appropriate one for you and your farm, there are a number of factors to consider.

### Melissa Shepherd

Environmental Analyst



## SPEND SUMMER SPRUCING UP YOUR FARM BUILDINGS

The cows are out to graze and your housing is lying empty for the next few months. Why not make the most of this opportunity and spruce up your buildings in readiness for winter? Don't overlook the importance of making improvements; especially where numbers and cow size has crept up over the years, but the buildings may not have changed. We believe that up to 25% of a cow's milk yield is related to how comfortable they are. That figure alone reveals the value of questioning whether you are maximising your cows' comfort. Whether it be increasing your cubicle size, taking time to look at your troughs or letting off smoke bombs to make sure airflows are uniform, making changes this summer will help to improve intakes this winter.

**Paul Henman**  
Principal Farm Business Consultant