

FeedSafe responds to animal welfare and food quality concerns

Whether it's a dairy herd producing milk for the domestic market, the racing industry, or endangered chimpanzees at Taronga Zoo, feed is a critical ingredient in maintaining animal health and welfare.

By Catherine Norwood

Long before the 4.5 million litres of fresh milk Clover Hill Dairies produces at Jamberoo each year reaches our supermarket shelves and breakfast tables, dairy owner Lynne Strong is monitoring her herd for anything that might affect the quality of milk, or consumer confidence in her product.



Dairy apprentice Emma Visser feeding calves at Clover Hill Dairies, where FeedSafe accredited feeds are an essential part of animal health and quality assurance programs.

She says the last thing she wants to do is risk the health of her dairy herd and jeopardise her farm business by feeding cows products of uncertain quality and origin.

And anything with the potential to jeopardise cow health could also reduce consumer confidence in animal products, particularly given growing consumer demands for higher levels accountability in animal welfare and inputs into the human food chain.

That's why she relies on the FeedSafe-accredited feed for her herd, which offer full traceability of all feed inputs and quality assurance for nutritional content and product safety.

Mrs Strong says growers and producers have a responsibility to give consumers the best products they can turn out.

"We need to embrace emerging consumer trends, including accountability in all aspects of the food chain, to ensure we have a market for our produce," she says.

The Stock Feed Manufacturers' Council of Australia (SFMCA) launched FeedSafe in 2003, with three main aims, says SFMCA executive officer John Spragg.

"It is to provide safe feed for animals, protect the safety of human food, specifically in meat, eggs and milk, and to protect the domestic and international reputation of Australia's livestock industries as being clean, and free from contamination," he says.

"International markets can be extremely sensitive, and just one positive sample of meat with a chemical residue, for example, could result in Australian products being banned; so there is a lot at stake."

About 12 million tonnes of stock feed is consumed in Australia each year. Beef feedlots are the major users accounting for 26 per cent, followed by the dairy industry at 25 per cent, poultry meat at 19.4 per cent and the pig industry 16 per cent. Chicken layers, aquaculture, the horse industry, live sheep and cattle exports and lamb feedlots are among the other, smaller users.

About 90 per cent of the stock feed sold in Australia comes from FeedSafe-accredited feed mills. Mr Spragg says the stock feed industry is keen to see all feed manufacturers FeedSafe accredited.

"Consumers want greater accountability about what goes into their food chain and many food industries demand total traceability of inputs. That's what FeedSafe provides."

Todd Middlebrook is technical services manager for the Sydney-based stock feed manufacturer Weston Animal Nutrition that supplies Clover Hill Dairies. He says supermarkets are looking further and further along the supply chain for quality assurance, and demanding higher levels of accountability from processors and primary producers.

“It’s already well established overseas, and is beginning to happen in Australia with milk processors and the Australian pork industry in particular,” he says.

Mr Middlebrook says FeedSafe accreditation sets the standard for good manufacturing practice in the stock feed industry, with stops and checks to prevent problems along the production line, from sourcing and purchasing to the blending of inputs and delivery of final products.

“Accredited companies are achieving to a standard that farmers can rely on, that processors and supermarkets and their consumers can rely on.”

Mr Middlebrook says Weston contracts some of its feed production to other companies, and relies on the FeedSafe accreditation of those contractors for confidence in the quality of the contracted products.

“We know they have the same kind of checks in place and the same level of scrutiny we do. It is a rigorous process involving continuous review and improvement,” he says.

Manager at Young Stockfeeds, Mike Smith, says FeedSafe accreditation is also a sought-after quality assurance among his many clients, who range from farmers and zookeepers to the horse racing industry, and even scientists feeding mice.

Providing feed for more than 80 different animal species, Mr Smith says Young’s production procedures follow the FeedSafe guidelines to ensure there is no cross contamination of feeds between products for various species.

“About 60 per cent of our business deals direct with farmers, selling in bulk, and another 25 to 30 per cent of our business involves selling bagged products through the local produce retailers in NSW, with some exports to various South Pacific islands.

“The FeedSafe logo on those bags is an indication of the quality control that goes into producing a safe product for pets and domestic animals as well as commercial livestock.

“People can easily relate to what it means. We have standard procedures for ensuring the quality of all our raw ingredients, and they can be confident that what they are buying will be safe for their animals.”



Paul Fitzpatrick relies on FeedSafe accreditation to ensure that the feed he provides for champion pacer Lombo Pocket Watch has been checked by a quality control program.

Mr Smith says the nutritional mix in mice cubes is very different to that provided in pig or dairy pellets, and there are flushing procedures in the manufacturing process to prevent contamination, which are all monitored and recorded as part of the FeedSafe quality control and risk management system.

The independent FeedSafe auditing helps to increase confidence that the company’s systems are working effectively while also identifying opportunities for improvement.

To achieve FeedSafe accreditation feed manufacturers must meet minimum standards in the maintenance of the premises, mill buildings, plant and equipment, staff training, the sourcing, purchasing, quality and storage of raw materials as well as feed formulation, manufacturing and labelling.

FeedSafe conducts annual, independent audits that also consider loading, transport and product delivery, product inspections, sampling and testing and customer complaint procedures.

For more information on becoming FeedSafe accredited contact the Stock Feed Manufacturers’ Council of Australia’s executive officer John Spragg 03 9769 7170, mobile 0402 831 843, email jspragg@sfmca.com.au or visit <http://www.sfmca.com.au>.