

An Essex unit is set to save more than £110,000 simply by switching pig housing

By Jonathan Long

Moving to an all-slurry system would, for many pig units, be daunting. But when you have a wealth of arable ground to spread it on and enough storage to enable it to be used appropriately, it can yield big savings for both pig and arable enterprises.

For John Gray in West Mersea, Essex, these benefits are only part of the reason for moving away from straw-based pig accommodation. Reduced labour costs and better working conditions are also key to the decision to finish 18,000 pigs a year on slats.

But Mr Gray has not always been such a fan of slurry-based systems. His first slatted finishing unit installed in 1993 caused significant fly nuisance around housing and the rest of the farm. "Flies became a real problem and we were receiving



Moving from straw bedding to a fully-slatted system is set to save more than £110,000 for John Gray.

Straw-to-slurry switch set to bring huge cost savings

complaints from neighbours. Flies were being attracted to the slurry due to the hard crust forming on its surface enabling them to land.

"Having tried various alternatives we started using an Epizym additive in 1995, which immediately resulted in no crust forming, significantly reducing the number of flies on the farm."

As every new batch of pigs is introduced to the housing the slurry tank is treated with the additive and more is included at regular intervals, he says. "While flies were the initial reason for using the additive, the effect on ease of using slurry was

equally dramatic. Slurry, which previously had been a hassle to handle, failing to flow down channels and creating spreading problems, became an easily-used product."

Having seen success in the unit's slurry tanks Mr Gray then began seeing improvements in the farm's two lagoons, which cover more than 4ha (10 acres). "Slurry tanks drain to these lagoons and we were beginning to see a sediment build-up in the bottom of them. As this sediment built up we were looking at having to dredge to ensure they remained effective. However, as the additive reached the lagoons we

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