



# WOODCHIP

## for Livestock Bedding Project

### Y Teulu Lloyd

Pencefn Drysgol, Tregaron

**The Woodchip for Livestock Bedding Project was initiated to investigate the potential of using woodchip as an alternative to straw as indoor bedding for sheep and cattle. From January to March 2006 cattle and sheep were housed on woodchip at three development sites, ADAS Pwllpeiran, IGER Aberystwyth and Glynllifon College. During this housing period similar groups were also housed on straw and comparisons were made of their feed intakes, growth rates, cleanliness and health. Assessments were also made of the time and labour requirements for using woodchip in comparison to straw.**

An additional part to the project is to determine how best to utilise the woodchip after animals have been bedded on it. Composting studies are being carried out by Bangor University to investigate how the woodchip breaks down and the nutrient value of the end product. The project will also investigate the potential to reuse the woodchip as bedding after it has been composted. Glynllifon College will demonstrate this in February 2007.

Eleven demonstration farms have been set up across Wales to allow farmers to view the project on a local basis. Either cattle or sheep will be housed on these farms for an 8-10 week period on both woodchip and straw. Assessments will be made of the health, welfare, growth and cleanliness of the animals as well as the labour required for the two



systems. Full costings will be given, as the economies of using woodchip will be an important consideration for farmers. The Lloyds are part of this demonstration farm network and below is a description of their farm enterprises and how woodchip fits into this.

Bill and Lynne Lloyd farm in partnership with their sons, Bill and Jim. Apart from the farm, Bill and Jim also operate two further companies, Pencefn Feeds Ltd and Pencefn Livestock Ltd.

### Sheep

The farm at Pencefn Drysgol is currently under going organic conversion, which the Lloyds feel, will allow them to target a higher value market for the lambs produced. The ewe flock consists of 750 Suffolk mules that are lambed indoors from late March onwards. The ewes are consistently achieving a lambing percentage of 170 but the family are constantly striving to improve on this. Texel rams are used as the terminal sire, providing the genetics to encourage early finishing off grass, with the majority of the lambs achieving E and U conformation classes.

### Lambs

The lamb finishing enterprise trades as Pencefn Livestock Ltd. Store lambs, weighing between 34 and 40 kg, are purchased in the autumn. These are finished indoors on feeds produced by Pencefn Feeds Ltd. The feed ration provides a daily liveweight gain of 350g/day resulting in the lambs finishing in 2-6 weeks

depending on the weight at which they were bought. The target dead weight for the lambs is 20kg with a conformation and fat class of U3L.

### Pencefn Feeds Ltd

The feed company was established as a result of local farmers enquiring about the rations Bill and Jim were using to finish the lambs. Their main speciality is a moist lamb finishing blend containing brewers grains, citrus pulp, bread, wheat, sugar beet and minerals. Some customers began requesting a free-flowing dry blend and so they formulated a ration containing wheat, barley, sugar beet, oilseed rape, high protein soya, molasses and minerals. Cattle and ewe blends are also produced and shortly an organic blend will be added to their portfolio.

### Woodchip

Bill and Jim are keen to try out woodchip bedding with their lamb finishing enterprise because of the cost and availability of straw in this area. Key areas that they will focus on are; do the lambs finish as quickly on woodchip as straw? Are the same growth rates achieved? Do the lambs keep clean on the woodchip? And what is the cost of using woodchip compared with straw? All these topics will be addressed during the eight-week housing project when the health, welfare, cleanliness and performance of the lambs will be monitored. Attention will then focus on the composting of the woodchip bedding and its potential uses.

### Farm Facts

- 143 hectare grassland farm plus other holdings
- 750 Suffolk mule breeding ewes
- Lamb finishing enterprise
- Feed company utilising their own rations