



**AG ATTENTION:** Fodder Solutions caught on in California following an overwhelming level of interest received at the World Ag Expo in Tulare last February, and again at the California State Fair in Sacramento this August. This is the exhibit outside of the State Fair Farm.

# Slash feed costs

By LEN RICHARDSON

**F**ODDER Solutions makes a climate-controlled growing chamber to meet the needs of the hobbyist or large-scale livestock producers. They can be used strategically to keep stock alive during drought, or as a full diet for high production.

The first U.S. producer to use Fodder Solutions in commercial production is California producer Bill Van Ryn of Modesto. Van Ryn operates an organic dairy with a herd of 300 Jersey and Holstein cows alongside his almond growing/processing enterprise.

He has applied for organic certification to introduce sprouts to his milking herd and hopes to have two growing units in operation producing 1,500 pounds of nutritious feed daily later this year.

The growing chamber turns 1 pound of barley seed into more than 8 pounds of feed sprouts in just six days, for feeding all classes of livestock. As the densely matted fodder is removed for feeding each day, the growing trays are recharged with fresh seed to restart the cycle.

## Cutting costs

Van Ryn plans to replace an expensive grain mix with sprouts for a natural diet. His cows graze 150 acres of irrigated pasture supplemented with 8 pounds of organic grain per cow each day, a mix of corn, barley, oats and soybeans.

He sources high-priced grain outside California at a cost of \$400 to \$500 a ton. He will be able to grow a ton of sprouts for just \$128, however.

Van Ryn has been fine-tuning his growing system since May,

## Key Points

- Sprouts can keep stock alive in drought or boost production.
- Sprouts' cost is less than half that of grain from out of state.
- System takes 40 minutes a day to load, clean and reseed.

feeding sprouts to beef cattle and two dairy cows not in the organic milking herd.

"One old cow has been producing for 356 days and was down to a gallon of milk. Since she has been on sprouts, her production has jumped up to three and a half gallons, and I have removed grain completely from her diet."

Van Ryn says as water is a critical issue, his sprouts can be grown with less water than the feed they replace.

His only inputs are barley seed, water and electricity for lighting and air conditioning.

"I've been on a fairly steep learning curve, but now have an assured feed supply at a very economical cost. And it only takes 20 minutes a day to load out the sprouts and 20 minutes to clean and reseed the growing trays.

"This feeding system has great potential for raising livestock in tough economic times. It's a real winner," concludes Van Ryn.

## Other experience

Ron Doore, a third-generation farmer/hay producer from Cut Bank, Mont., has taken delivery of two units manufactured at Oxnard. Doore studied agricultural business and economics before joining the family business, Sun Roads Farmory.

His irrigated alfalfa has expanded to 840 acres and in-



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cludes registered quarter horses and beef cattle.

Doore has been interested in hydroponics for many years, and the Australian technology to sprout grain was superior to anything he had seen in North America, he says. "It allows farmers to grow a consistently high-quality feed regardless of weather, and at a lower cost than alternative feeds."

## Sprouts for horses

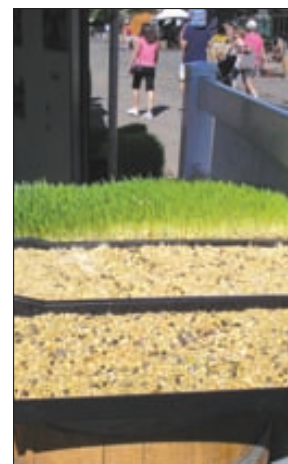
Australian Naomi Mays is determined to succeed in equestrian competition. She is a member of the Victorian Under-21 riders' squad, and has won a Melbourne junior championship.

She has a special bond with horses at Launching Place in the Yarra Valley, where she lives with her mother, Georgina. They also raise Dexter cattle.

The horses have thrived since the sprouts replaced a dry feeding regime of lucerne hay and chaff. Each day, their midsize unit produces 18 slabs of fodder, weighing 264 pounds, from barley seed with a little added lupin. The fodder carried 15 horses through the winter.

"My equestrian coach was so impressed with the condition of my horses that she now feeds sprouts, too," Naomi says.

Learn more at [www.foddersolutions.net](http://www.foddersolutions.net).



**FEED SEEDS:** Barley, sunflowers and lupins are among the possibilities for growing feed sprouts.