

## The way to fight hypocalcaemia

**WRP:** Can you describe the farm? How large is the farm and the herd?

**Karol Wierciński:**

We are running two dairy farms. One in Wojanowo near Pruszcz Gdański and the other in Pogorzala Wieś near Malbork. These are large farms. The one in Wojanowo has 430 cows and that in Pogorzala 390 cows. 95% are HF cows.

**WRP:** What is the milking system there?

**KW:** We use DeLaval milking parlours. In Wojanowo we have a 2x10 stall herringbone parlour and a parallel 2x12 stall parlour in Pogorzala Wieś, with 10,000 litres yield. The animals are assessed by the Polish Federation of Milk Producers.

**WRP:** What is the feeding system? Do you have your own meadows?

**KW:** We use TMR system. Feedstuff is made at the farm from silages and acquired raw components. We have maize, grass and alfalfa silage. We have meadows in Pogorzala Wieś and feeding areas with grass and alfalfa grown on arable land in Wojanowo.

**WRP:** What additional feedstuff do you purchase?

**KW:** We buy soy and rapeseed grain, beet pulps, molasses, mineral- and vitamin additives. Barley and maize grains are self-produced.

**WRP:** Where do you deliver your milk?

**KW:** To the Dairy Cooperative "Mlekwata" in Lubawa.

**WRP:** What were the health problems of the herd prior to using X-Zelit?

**KW:** The main issues with the herd were parturient paresis affecting invariably 15%-50% of the calving cows, depending on the period. Besides, we observed an increased number of postnatal pelvic inflammatory diseases; typical problems for this type of production such as somatic cells level or frequent cases of mastitis within permitted levels. In the past we had lameness issues but those were brought under control.

**WRP:** What made you look for a hypocalcaemia drug?

**KW:** Given the frequency of hypocalcaemia and resulting losses, we decided to take preventive measures.



*Karol Wierciński, Chief Specialist for Animal Production at POLHOZ.*

The only solution available on the Polish

market at that time were Epsom salts. I must admit we achieved some results with the salts. However, they bring some risks as well – you must analyse urine pH and adjust the dose. With an incorrect dose, problems may occur that are more serious than hypocalcaemia itself. In addition, the salts limit the feeding possibilities in the perinatal period. And this is of a key importance to milk production and cow longevity. Following the request of our feeding specialist, the salts were stopped. But the hypocalcaemia issue remained. Then our feeding specialist mentioned the calcium binding preparation. And I followed up on that, did some reading and so I came across X-Zelit. The idea appealed to me as reasonable, simple and logical. I was surprised not to find that product on the Polish market. We had to place a special order for the first batch.

**WRP:** How long have you been using X-Zelit? What doses?

**KW:** We started in June at the farm in Wojanowo with half a kilo per animal per one day for 14 days before calving. After trial, we started to use it at the second farm.

The preparation is sprinkled over the feedstuff and the cows are well willing

to eat it; they are apparently looking out for the product granules in the feedstuff finding it tasty. And that counts!

**WRP:** What are the effects?

**KW:** In the farm in Wojanowo alone, for four months from July to October, around 120 cows calved and we had only 2 downed animals.

**WRP:** It is a world of difference compared to the past, isn't it?

**KW:** Yes. We have virtually eliminated parturient paresis related culling. The vet who takes care of the herd, Przemysław Kowalski, calving specialist, reported already in August that the endometritis problem clearly improved at both farms. I myself linked it to the product.

**WRP:** On the whole, do you think that the product works?

**KW:** Yes. We have lower costs of endometritis and parturient paresis treatment and reduced culling. In a matter of several months or so we expect the main calving rates to improve.

**WRP:** Does that translate economically into a net profit?

**KW:** This is not a cheap product, but I can't afford hypocalcaemia. I'm not going to give up on X-Zelit.

**WRP:** What additional effects have you observed?

**KW:** I see better appetite, quicker milk increase, quicker reaching of the lactation peak and less ketosis cases in cows after calving. These are observations hard to capture in numbers, clearly down to X-Zelit and good feeding advice.

**WRP:** You said you intend to continue with the product. Is it also with the aim to increase milk production?

**KW:** Yes. Bringing hypocalcaemia down will surely improve the yield.

POLHOZ Sp. z o.o. was established over 20 years ago after the restructuring of several State-Owned Collective Rural Enterprises (PGRs). The company's share capital is over 22 million PLN. The company's core operations are large-scale farming. Main occupations include:

- Arable farming – acreage of ca. 7,000 hectares. Every year the company supplies around 21,000 tons of barley, 5,500 tons of rape, 7,300 tons of sugar beets and 6,500 tons of potatoes, mostly seed potatoes.
- Cattle breeding – around 850 milk cows.

Annually over 8,500,000 litres of milk are supplied for further processing. In production, special importance is attached to the milk quality, while caring for the animal welfare and protecting the natural environment.

### Farm in Pogorzala Wieś

The 790 hectares Pogorzala Wieś arable and breeding farm is located in Miłoradz District. The core profile is milk cows breeding (currently 390 cows). The farm has a modern barn dating from 2008. The farm is also comprised of arable land with crops grown mainly for cattle breeding (maize and grass for feedstuffs) and barley, rape and seed potatoes.

### Farm in Wojanowo

The arable and breeding Wojanowo farm is located in Pruszcz Gdański District and occupies an area of 1040 hectares. The main operations are plant production (barley, rape, seed potatoes) and milk cattle breeding. At the moment the farm has 430 milk cows. Wojanowo has its own drying and storage facilities.