

PHONE A FRIEND FOR ON-FARM HELP

When you have a pest or disease problem on-farm that you are unsure of, or when you need to confirm the right way forward, what do you do? For Neil Newman of Country Farm Fresh Mushrooms, the answer is as close as the computer and the phone.

Neil said that in a small farming business, operators wear many hats.

“The simple fact is that you cannot be fully across everything, so you need access to the right resources promptly to operate effectively and efficiently. The levy-funded project Pest and Disease Management and Research (MU16003) is one of the resources that helps us in numerous ways on the farm.”

Neil explained that the first step was to use the AGORA website to work through available information when he ran into a problem. The library contains a wealth of information curated by the project team, with specific attention to articles of interest for the Australian industry.

“If I am still uncertain about anything, the next step is to contact the project team and talk through the problem.... (they) can better understand how the farm operates through one-on-one discussions.

“Having someone who has the on-farm knowledge and knows the breadth of available information is invaluable. It is a great asset to access information and support and then use that information to suit our business. And importantly, the project team can also research materials and email the links for articles of interest.

“Our farm thankfully does not have a lot of issues, but this type of support helps us minimise risk and manage any problems that occur in an effective and timely manner.”

He said the information on available chemicals and correct chemical usage was highly worthwhile.

“Having this information, knowing how to prevent issues from occurring, and understanding the threshold limits,

allows us to take action sooner and with better and safer practices. Ultimately, this allows us to produce more quality mushrooms.

“In our industry, there are plenty of consultants providing advice, but if you go blindly and use what they are telling you to use, you could be using the product wrongly, or you may not be allowed to use it in the first place.

“New products require an assessment of procedures, particularly when it comes to farm hygiene. By checking with the project team, you can be sure that your QA documentation is aligned with any changes.

“The right way may take a little longer, but by doing the right thing, you are protecting yourself firstly as a business and secondly the industry as a total,” he said.



AGORA Resources

The AGORA website is central library of mushroom pest, disease, and hygiene information. Hundreds of resources are available, including both locally produced fact sheets and articles and publications from around the world. There are also videos demonstrating sampling methods, spot treatments and pest and disease identification.

Other topics include the important roles of compost quality, farm hygiene and other factors.

The AGORA website is password protected. To obtain a login please contact Judy Allan (judyallan@bigpond.com) or Chris Rowley (chris.rowley@optusnet.com.au)



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