



Oats used in Fodder Factory

EXCESSIVELY wet winters at Port Macquarie and a stock feed shortage in 1988/89 led Peter Ryan to design the Fodder Factory.

Based on a British invention it is a system of turning oats in grain form into sprouted grass and in the process almost double the protein content while increasing the bulk.

The largest of the three factories Mr Ryan sells has a high tensile galvanised steel frame 10.5 metres by 5.5 metres covered with a clear double net solar weave plastic material in which 960, 40cm x 46cm plastic trays are stored on galvanised racks and it costs \$38,500.

There are also 400

AT A GLANCE

■ The Fodder Factory turns 1kg oats into 7kg sprouted shoots in 8 days.

■ While at the same time it almost doubles protein levels.

■ Tests with hydroponic fodder show 1kg is nutritionally equivalent to 3kg of lucerne.

and 720 tray structures costing \$26,490 and \$34,530.

A micro processor keeps the temperature in the mid 20 degree range by evaporative cooling and/or gas heating and periodically sprays the trays with a nutrient solution. This allows the system to operate 365 days a year regardless of outside conditions.

Each tray is filled with one kilo of oats

and in eight days the contents of the tray has 'grown' to 17-20cm in height, weighs 7kg and the protein level has risen from 6-7 percent to more than 11 percent (Uni of NSW tests).

This enables the

turnout of one tonne of feed from an input of 120kg of oats

Fully set up on an existing cement slab the Fodder Factory uses about 1000 litres of water a day and \$70 worth of nutrient solution will produce 25 tonnes of fodder.

Mr Ryan said costing oats at \$250 tonne and taking all the running costs of nutrient, electricity and gas, the fodder costs \$40.90 tonne.

There are at present six Fodder Factories working in

New South Wales and Queensland providing feed for everything from red deer to fat lambs, dairy cows and beef cattle.

One working in Queensland is at David Scholl's dairy farm at Biggenden.

Mr Scholl is feeding his milkers with nothing but the sprouted oats as he has no paddock feed. The cows are given a tray of the fodder in the bale night and morning and it has increased their milk production by 22 percent.