

# 'FARMERS CAN SOLVE THE AMMONIA PROBLEM'

**Dutch dairy farmers can reduce their nitrogen emissions by 25 to 40 per cent without it costing them a cent – by applying their husbandry skills. Gerard Migchels of Wageningen Livestock Research presented his views on this on Monday 21 October during *Resource's* nitrogen debate.**

The dairy farms that took part in the experimental farm *Proeftuin Veenweiden* managed to reduce their ammonia emissions by 25 per cent in a four-year period, said Migchels. The most important measures they took? The cows were out in the fields more often and the farmers diluted the manure with water before spreading it on the fields. The farmers who gave their livestock low-protein feed and kept fewer calves achieved further nitrogen reductions. And to top it off, the measures resulted in a small financial saving for the farmers. Migchels' conclusion: 'The farmers' husbandry skills can go a long way towards solving the ammonia problem.'

Previous applied research that Migchels did on dairy farmers in and around Natura 2000 areas in the province of Overijssel produced similar findings. However, this fieldwork had never been translated into advice and guidelines for all Dutch dairy farmers, Migchels noted. He added that to achieve further long-term reductions in nitrogen emissions, the Netherlands needs to ban slurry and organize separate collection of manure and urine. However, that would be a costly procedure, as farmers would need to adapt their cowsheds. In the *Resource* debate, Wim de Vries, person-



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▲ A visitor discusses matters with the speakers at the *Resource* debate at Impulse.

al professor of Environmental Systems Analysis, was also in favour of improving mineral management in the agricultural sector. 'But if we really want to close the mineral cycles in this country, we have to reduce our national herd.' Migchels agrees and has taken this into account: 'Only extensive, nature-friendly livestock farmers will be permitted to keep cattle in the Natura 2000 areas; and in the province of Overijssel this policy has already been introduced.' **AS**

*See also p. 12-15: Closing the cycles together*

## 'BUILDING CONTRACTORS SENT HOME FOR NOTHING'

Wageningen 'nitrogen professor' Wim de Vries understands why the building sector held demonstrations on 29 October against the government's nitrogen regulations. During the *Resource* debate he presented a pie chart which he said shows that there is 'no point' in stopping building construction. The building sector is responsible for a mere 0.6 per cent of emissions, one of the smallest portions of the pie. 'These people were sent home for nothing when it comes to nitrogen emissions.'

**ME**

