

# Northumberland's Bedmax hails export strength as it targets more sales

Equine bedding and sustainable fire log maker Bedmax has talked of recent growth and export success across key markets in the Far East, Middle East and Europe.

The Northumberland-based horse bedding specialist, which has production facilities at Belford, Chathill, Newark in Nottinghamshire and Andover in Hampshire, saw turnover edge up from £20.9m to £21.8m in the year to the end of March 2024, new accounts show. Operating profits also increased, from £271,405 to £457,943, while overall profit was down slightly from £278,920 to £267,753.

Managing director Tim Smalley told BusinessLive that investments over recent years meant the firm can now produce more than ever of its wood shavings-based products, and that its focus is now on growing sales.

He said: "We've grown nicely. We've obviously had to put prices up because of ongoing inflationary pressures. I don't think, like most people, we've been able to put them up as much as we should have – therefore margins get a little squeezed but will hopefully catch-up in the years to come. But our sales have been good all over, especially export. We do quite a lot of export to Far East, the Middle East and Europe which is all going well."

Accounts documents also show that Bedmax, which employs around 60 people, made significant investments in plant and machinery and into research and development activities across its UK sites.

Mr Smalley explained: "We're a fairly unique business –

there's not many in our industry, so therefore we have to borrow ideas and kit from other industries and have to fit them to suit our purpose. We've done a lot of that recently and apart from the shavings we make our Hotmax heat logs. We've automated the packaging of them, which has cost a fair bit.

“And we've also brought out a new product called Strawmax, which is straw pellets for horse bedding and we've had to set up two plants with that in the last couple of years – one last year and one the year before.”

Despite a series of export headwinds over the last decade including Brexit, shipping disruption in the Red Sea and inflation of container costs on the back of Covid, Bedmax customers are said to have remained loyal. However, Mr Smalley sounded a note of caution how the economy might fare in the months ahead, highlighting increased National Insurance Contributions as a burden.

Bedmax's beginnings can be traced back to the mid-1980s at Greymare Farm in North Northumberland, with the introduction of Haymax. The idea was in response to evidence that dust and spores in stables were contributing to equine respiratory disease. Mr Smalley and family discovered that poor quality bedding was often to blame and began to develop wood shavings-based products.

In 2000, production of pine shavings-based Bedmax began and by 2008 the firm had received the first of two royal warrants it holds. In 2009 the firm launched its Hotmax heat logs using dust collected from the production of bedding products.