



"The Allflex Heatime System has certainly made our lives easier workwise. We don't have to be so particular about picking up cows in heat because the machine will pick it up for us."

Craig Thorburn, Co-owner, Centreview

Centreview Catches More Heats and Grows Herd Naturally with Allflex Heatime® System

BACKGROUND

Centreview in Simpson, Victoria, Australia was originally founded as a dairy farm in the early 1960s, and purchased by Craig and Tracey Thorburn in 1998. They started out with 140 cows and have since grown the herd to 400 milking cows, plus around 270 heifers, mostly by natural growth.

CHALLENGES

Craig Thorburn works the farm together with his wife, Tracey, and two employees. As the farm grew, they were finding it increasingly difficult to keep up with the gruelling schedule of checking cows for heat, recording heats, and keeping track of the data.

He decided to add an electronic cow monitoring system, "to bring all that data onto a screen for us, so we could go through the data and work out what cows are on heat, what cows aren't cycling, and treat them earlier." He continues: "I thought that it would make our lives easier. And, I wanted to try and get more cows in calf – which would be a financial benefit for us."



AT A GLANCE

Company: Centreview

Location: Simpson, Victoria, Australia

Herd size: 400 milking cows, 270 heifers

Challenges

- Reduce labour involved in heat detection
- Accurately detect heats, including silent heat
- Increase conception rate by better timing AI

System

- Allflex Heatime® H System for activity monitoring

Benefits

- Eliminated the time and hassle of visual observation for heat detection
- All heats, including silent heats, are now detected
- Added 100 cows over three years, through natural growth



SYSTEM

Centreview implemented the Allflex Heatime systems with H Tags for heat detection in 2011. It was chosen over competitors due to its reputation. As Thorburn says: "There were so many users all over the world, I figured it must be working well."

All 400 milking cows now wear the system's H tags for activity monitoring. The Allflex Heatime System is integrated with the farm's herd management system, so that the cows ready for AI are automatically drafted after milking.

BENEFITS

Craig relies on the Heatime System to provide crucial information on his cows' heat status and to give insight into their overall condition. Alerts are received via the herd management system, and he also checks reports via the Heatime terminal.

"I like that the graphs show activities going back 60-80 days for the individual cows. I use the graphs for non-cycling cows a fair bit, and for cows that have inconsistent heats. If a cow has been 80-90 days without a heat then the system tells me, so I know to start with the ov-synch program or have the vet check her."

The system's reports and automatic sorting of cows in heat help improve the efficiency and accuracy of the farm's AI process. "The system gives the optimum hours for AI after standing heat. After each milking, all the cows that need to be joined are in the yard because the Heatime System has caught the right cows, and has alerted whoever's milking."

The Allflex Heatime System has also reduced workload on the farm, saving 1-1.5 hours a day that was previously spent on visual observation. "We used to go down and walk through the cows 2-3 times a day just trying to find cows in heat," says Craig. "We've since gotten bigger and can't afford the labour involved in that anymore. Now we don't do it at all."

According to Craig, a lot of the heat detection guesswork has also been eliminated. "The tail paint would be another thing we'd have to look at during milking. Now we don't have to do that, which removes the second-guessing. We haven't used tail paint or patches for three years, saving us hundreds – probably thousands – of dollars a year."

The system has proved highly accurate at picking up heats, and even when it catches a false heat, it's beneficial. As Craig explains: "When a cow has a heat, but she's not actually on, it probably means there's a problem inside her. So that's a good chance to check her out and see if anything's wrong."

He says the system is also good at catching silent heats. "A cow might only be on for 2-3 hours. And she might not jump too much. That's a major reason we invested in the system, and it's definitely been helping us find those."

Additionally, the Heatime is helping the Centreview team catch illness earlier. "We can pick up that something's wrong if a cow's activity is off-base," says Craig. "If she had low activity for two milkings, then we go look at her. This has already been effective in finding mastitis and gut problems – allowing us to catch it earlier, so we can treat it."

Centreview has seen excellent heat detection results from the system, achieving a 90-95% submission rate. "We do the AI over the course of about six weeks each time, as opposed to the four weeks in which we used to mate," says Craig. "So we're doing about 150 cows each time, and the conception rate is around 65% over the six weeks."

The farm is getting about 20 more heifers a year thanks to the improved heat detection and AI timing. As a result, Centreview has added 100 cows to its herd in the three years since implementing the Allflex Heatime H System.

A bonus benefit of the system's accuracy and automation is that Craig can now go away on holiday worry-free – a first for him. "I used to have to physically look and see if the cows are in heat, and now I know the machine will find them."



Livestock Intelligence™

About Allflex Livestock Intelligence

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Allflex Livestock Intelligence, part of MSD Animal Health, is the world leader in the design, development, manufacturing and delivery of solutions for animal identification, monitoring and traceability. Our solutions empower farmers to act in a timely manner, to safeguard their animals' health, while achieving optimal production outcomes for a healthy food supply.

Through its commitment to the Science of Healthier Animals®, MSD Animal Health offers veterinarians, farmers, pet owners and governments one of the widest ranges of veterinary pharmaceuticals, vaccines and health management solutions and services. MSD Animal Health is dedicated to preserving and improving the health, well-being and performance of animals and the people who care for them.

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