



"With Heatime, we now have real-time information, and reproductive performance has improved immensely – which is what I expected."

Peter Garratt, Co-owner & Manager, Argyle Dairy

Argyle Dairy improves AI results, reduces culling, and increases yield with the Allflex Heatime® HR System

BACKGROUND

Argyle Dairy in Southbrook, Queensland, Australia was founded by Peter Garratt's great grandparents in 1926. The farm has been managed by Peter since around 2000, with the help of his parents. The herd stands at about 250 milking cows, up from 140-150 ten years ago, with an additional 220 heifers, mostly from natural growth.

CHALLENGES

In the past, there has been a high turnover of cows in the Argyle Dairy herd. "We do all AI breeding, and I knew that our reproductive performance was not as good as it could be," says Peter. "The target is to keep a flat line in our milk production. But we've always struggled to have a fresh enough herd because we were carrying too many stale cows. Plus, a lot of cows didn't go into calf, probably because of poor timing and lack of detection. Potentially, many of them could have been retained if I'd had better information."

Recognizing that depending on visual observation was insufficient, Peter decided that an electronic heat detection system "could vastly improve our performance."

AT A GLANCE

Company: Argyle Dairy
Location: Southbrook, Queensland, Australia
Herd size: ~250 milking cows and 220 heifers; all Holsteins

Challenges

- Increase heat identification and AI accuracy
- Increase milk production
- Minimize time spent on visual observation
- Make better informed culling decisions

System

- Allflex Heatime® HR System with HR LD tags for real-time heat detection, rumination, and health monitoring

Benefits

- Can now accurately identify heat, and optimally time AI
- Time and stress around visual observation and other manual tasks have been significantly reduced
- 100-day in calf rate rose from 37% to 58% in the first year
- 80-day submission rate rose from 44% to 79% in the first year
- With more cows in calf earlier, average monthly milk production is about 40,000 liters higher
- Mature cow submission rate rose from 44% to 78%, resulting in fewer cows being unnecessarily culled

SYSTEM

In October 2015, Heatime distributor Semex installed the Allflex Heatime HR System with HR LD tags, at Argyle Dairy. The Heatime touchscreen terminal is located in the dairy, alongside the computer with the Easy Dairy herd management software. This allows Peter to easily use automated drafting for cows that the Heatime system identifies for joining, health treatment, and more.

The decision to go with Allflex's solution was easy. "Allflex has a strong reputation with thousands of devices on cows in multiple countries and continents. I could see the company is solid and continuing to improve the product and innovate."

BENEFITS

Peter says the Allflex Heatime HR System is a cinch to use. "Anyone who can use a smartphone can use Heatime. It probably took me a day during the initial training to get my head around it, and within a week, I was already fairly confident using it."

His routine is quite simple. Twice daily, at the start of each milking session, he checks the Heatime terminal and assesses the Heat Report and Health Report. From there he makes decisions about joining. "I do all my joining off what Heatime tells me. It's all there; it gives me the indicator as to the level of heat. The terminal tells me how many days since their previous heat or joining. If I see a cow in the paddock getting ridden, I'll take note of it, but I won't go looking. No more racing around through the herd to see who's jumping who or whatever else."

And catching all heats is achievable. "I can make a decision to do AI on a cow that I didn't even know was in heat before. Some of the cows have the heat during the night, and by the morning they've finished their cycle and I would have no chance of detecting those cows on heat before."

This saves Peter a lot of time and stress. "We were probably doing a poor job of visual observation because we didn't have the time to put into it. Now I've cut a whole lot of stress out of our daily routine, knowing that I can rely on what I see on the Heatime terminal."

He notes that the Allflex system has also made catching mastitis easier. "I only have to check the cows on the Health Report rather than the whole herd."

Installing the Allflex Heatime HR System has led to vast, measurable improvements across the herd when comparing crucial statistics for the years 2014/15 against 2015/16.

The 100-day in calf rate rose from 37% to 58%, and the 80-day submission rate rose from 44% to 79%, while the mature cow submission rate rose similarly, from 44% up to 78%. At the same time, the voluntary waiting period dropped from 42 days to 40 days.

By getting cows in calf an average of 80 days earlier, the herd now yields about 40,000 more litres of milk per month.

With the vast increase in the mature cow submission rate, Peter has been able to significantly reduce culling. According to Peter: "We've probably culled too heavily in the past because so many cows were not in calf, and that was probably because we didn't know they were in heat at the right time. This is significant because a mature cow is the most profitable to continue to milk. She pays for herself in the first year, and in the second year you start to make more profit. And mature cows have better feed conversion, their capacity is better."

In addition, for the first time in 17 years Argyle Dairy has a surplus of cows, enabling Peter to sell 15-20 heifers in the first year, as fresh cows or springers.

When it comes to recommending the Allflex Heatime System to other farmers, Peter is clear: "A dry cow doesn't make milk, and the most important thing is to get them pregnant again. Heatime is one of the best investments that we've made on the farm over the years. I'd recommend it to anyone."



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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