



"The Heatime System works like a mobile phone or iPhone. If you can use an iPhone you can use Heatime."

Col Cowan, Owner and Operator, Budgeree Holsteins

# Budgeree Holsteins Reduces Calving Interval, Improves Herd Health and Productivity with Allflex Heatime® HR System

## BACKGROUND

Budgeree Holsteins in Hannam Vale, New South Wales, is a third-generation farm owned and operated by Col Cowan. Since 1985, the farm has grown from 50 cows producing 0.25 million litres, to 210 cows producing 1.8 million litres per annum.

## CHALLENGES

As a farm that relies mainly on natural increase, Budgeree Holsteins needs to be particularly adept at picking up heats. According to Col, "Our cows weren't being picked up on season, so I wanted to improve heat detection."

He also wanted to catch illnesses related to rumination quicker, to reduce the impact on cows' health and productivity.

All of this Col was hoping to do whilst saving time and reducing the labour load on his workers.

## AT A GLANCE

Company: Budgeree Holsteins

Location: Hannam Vale, New South Wales, Australia

Herd size: 210 milking cows, and 220 heifers and dry cows

### Challenges

- Detect illness earlier, to better treat cows
- Improve accuracy of heat detection
- Reduce time and labour spent on heat detection
- Reduce calving intervals, and expand herd through natural growth
- Monitor farm whilst offsite

### System

- Allflex Heatime® HR System for rumination, heat detection and cow identification functionality, with HR tags on 250 cows

### Benefits

- Metabolic disorders caught early, thanks to rumination monitoring
- Able to pinpoint optimal time for AI
- Cows are now calving after 12-13 months, instead of 16 months, enabling 20-30 extra cow sales each year
- Higher milk yield
- Heat detection tasks now take 30 minutes daily, down from two hours
- Confident, effective decision making even when offsite

## SYSTEM

Col installed the Allflex Heatime® HR System on his farm in April 2014. He had been thinking of adding the system for a while, and was especially convinced after one of his neighbours vouched for it.

The rumination monitoring was a big factor in his decision. Col notes that 20% of cows show signs of standing heat for only four hours, so he saw the Allflex Heatime System as a major tool for picking up those heats. Additionally, "A cow chewing her cud is a major indicator of a healthy cow – and if she's not chewing her cud, it's a major indicator that something's wrong. Early detection is fairly crucial for rectifying a sick cow."

Now 250 of his cows wear Allflex Heatime tags. Two system readers are located at the entry of the herringbone dairy so that the cows are read as they come in. Another reader is located over the water trough in the calving barn, next to the dairy.

## BENEFITS

Col starts milking at 5:30 am each day. The cows are read before they're milked, and any cow needing attention based on the Heatime reports gets sorted in the yard. This helps Col better time AI.

According to Col, "If the cow has been on 8-10 hours I will AI her right away, particularly if I know I'll be alone at the next milking, since I'm the only one on the farm certified for AI."

Rumination monitoring helps Col get an early indication of developing health issues. If a cow's rumination numbers drop to 200 minutes or less, he checks the cow for acidosis, respiratory trouble, and ketosis. "Our nutritionist believes 25-30% of all fresh cows suffer from ketosis, so that's pretty significant and you really want to pick up on it early. Ketosis can bring her production down, but the drop in production might not be noticeable, say a change from 50 litres down to 40. But the system will pick it up, so then you can look at her and treat her if necessary."

Col also uses the system to monitor rumination of his springers (freshening dry cows), with another reader over a water trough in his calving area. This gives him a good idea of each cow's rumination before calving, so he can see if she recovers well post-calving.



This has already helped identify several cows with early lactation metabolic disorders, which he credits with having saved them.

Although so far he has seen the conception rate rise by just 5%, Col says for him it's about more cows being presented for AI, and is pleased with the results on that count. "A lot of cows come on season after 35 days in milk. With the second heat, at around day 55, they are joined. Most cows will have the opportunity to be joined three times before hitting 100 days."

He adds: "Using the system has also tightened up my calving pattern. Before the average cow would have been calving every 16 months. Now it's down to 12-13 months, so I'll be able to sell off 20-30 extra cows worth about \$2,000-\$3,000 each this year alone. This helps recover the cost of the system pretty quickly."

In addition, Col is now using only about 20% of the tail paint he had previously used, saving a further \$1,000 a year.

The Allflex Heatime HR System is also proving a big time saver. Instead of spending two hours per day on observation and tail painting, it's more like half an hour. And, "If the cow is cystic or you want to know how many days she's been in heat, the records for each cow are right there at your fingertips in the system, so you don't have to go look at your log book, which also saves time."

Col is enjoying new-found confidence when off the farm. "If I have a freshly calved cow, I can leave a note for my workers to check the rumination of a specific cow and send me a text with exact defining numbers. Without having to physically look at the cow, I can make a decision about what to do."



### About Allflex Livestock Intelligence

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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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