



"If cow health is important to you, the rumination monitoring will make the system pay for itself – and that's without even considering the heat activity part."

Karl Funk, Co-Owner, Funk's Midway Dairy

Funk's Dairy reduces costs and gains peace of mind with Allflex rumination and activity monitoring system

BACKGROUND

A true family farm, Funk's Midway Dairy, located near Melrose, Minnesota, was established in the 1970s by John and Dorothy Funk. Today the dairy is run by John and Dorothy and their three sons: Karl, Jeff and Greg. The farm grows its own feed: corn, soy beans and alfalfa, with some commodities purchased to supplement nutrition.

CHALLENGES

As highly experienced, excellent herdsman, the Funks have always successfully bred off natural heat, and are justifiably proud of their longstanding 27-30% pregnancy rate. However, as the farm grew, it became harder to train new employees to watch effectively for standing heat. Also, the Funks were looking for a better way to monitor the health of their fresh cows. "It was always a guess as to how the fresh cows were doing. Most are healthy but you're always watching," explains Karl Funk.

AT A GLANCE

Company: Funk's Midway Dairy
Location: New Munich, MN
Herd size: 600 cows

Challenges

- Significantly reduce visual heat observation labor and time
- Support new nutrition strategy and gain early confirmation on effects of changes
- Improve decision making on veterinary treatments to reduce costs and increase peace of mind
- Significantly reduce time spent monitoring fresh cows

System

- Allflex's Heatime® HR Tag with rumination, heat detection and cow identification functionality
- Allflex's DataFlow II herd monitoring software

Benefits

- Timed breedings are now 3%, down from 9% prior to Allflex system
- Decreased ov-synch costs by 66% due to improved nutrition and Allflex system
- Drug costs for severe mastitis are down by 33%
- Ketosis drench costs are down by 30%
- Faster fresh cow observation frees up time for hoof trimming – saving estimated \$2,200 annually

SYSTEM

Funk's local Semex representative recommended the Allflex Heatime® system with rumination and activity monitoring capabilities as a complete solution for the dairy's needs. 350 Allflex Heatime tags are worn by cows from two weeks before calving until they are 60-80 days pregnant.

Before installing the Allflex system, the dairy's employees would note visible heats at 10:00pm and at 2:30am, the Funks checked those notes and guesstimated the stage of heat. "That was a tough process; human error made it difficult," recalls Funk. "Now we just work with the system. The program tells us when to breed, so we are phasing out having employees check for heat."

Likewise, the Allflex system has become an indispensable part of the daily health routine. At 3:00am, an employee goes over the rumination report to determine which cows need attention. "Instead of spending time eyeballing all the cows, we go straight to those one or two cows," comments Funk.

BENEFITS

The Allflex system is helping revive the dairy's pregnancy rate. "In recent years, the pregnancy rate has been drifting down," recalls Funk. "Now that we have a better nutrition strategy and the Allflex system, we're confident we will soon get back to 30%."

While the Funks found learning the Allflex system easy, following the AI timing recommendations took some getting used to. Funk says: "After years of successfully doing the breeding ourselves, we could not just flip a switch and change, so we had to build up the trust. But it turned out the system's recommendations were correct." Utilizing the highly detailed heat information provided by the Allflex system, Funk closely tracks conception rates relative to time left for AI as indicated by the system. As a result, the dairy has developed a new breeding protocol for third-lactation and older cows, in which those cows are bred earlier than the younger cows.

The Allflex health reports have significantly reduced the daily health observation workload, particularly on fresh cows. And, by using the rumination measurements to assess response to treatment, Funk has gained actionable, money-saving insight. "We realized we were over-treating about half of our mastitis cows, and we have since reduced drug costs by about one-third on severe cases of mastitis," says Funk.

"Also, before Allflex, we would drench cows with ketosis twice a day for two weeks. Now, in the second week, we usually drench only once a day and sometimes, the system tells us they're healthy enough to not need further treating."

In addition, the Allflex system has taken the guesswork out of how nutritional changes are affecting the cows, improving the Funks' decision making. For example: "We recently put meadow grass in the ration. When we looked at the rumination, we could tell the hassle was not justified."

And, on an ongoing basis: "We compare high and low groups to see how the rations affect the cows. It's a comfort knowing we can watch the changes. You can always watch for a decrease in milk production, but by then the damage has already started, and there are many variables."



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