"Before using SCR's Heatime System, I made all the decisions based on personal experience. Now with Heatime, I feel closer to the cows and more confident in my decisions."

Alessandro Nicola, Co-Owner and Herd Manager, Nicola Renato Farm

Nicola Renato Farm Reduces Calving Interval and Saves Heat Observation Time with Allflex Heatime® HR System

BACKGROUND

The Nicola Renato Farm is a second generation family-run farm in Northwest Italy. Founded in 1940 with just five cows, the farm grew to 40 milking cows by the 1990s. The farm was renovated in 1995 and now has a herd of 185 cows, including 95 milking cows and 60 heifers.

CHALLENGES

Timely detection of estrus is essential for the success of artificial insemination. Like many dairies, Nicola Renato depended on farm staff to recognize standing heats. But Alessandro Nicola, Co-Owner and Herd Manager, felt that visual observation wasn't delivering the maximum pregnancy rate. "I had the feeling that I was missing heats and this was something we just couldn't afford," he explains.

Other important decisions were dependent on observation and staff expertise. Illnesses and nutrition problems were detected only once milk production had decreased or cow's appearance had begun to deteriorate. This cost the farm dearly, with lower milk sales, additional health care expenses, increased fertility treatments and culls.

AT A GLANCE

Farm: Nicola Renato Farm
Location: Cavallermaggiore, Italy
Herd size: 185 milking cows

Challenges

- Increase heat detection rate
- Gain peace of mind in heat detection accuracy
- Improve decision making on health and nutrition issues, and avoid impact on milk production

System

- Allflex Heatime® HR System with rumination, heat detection and cow identification functionality

Benefits

- Reduced calving interval by 19 days due to accurate detection of estrus for optimal AI timing
- Increased fresh cows insemination rate – raised from 85% to 100%
- Significantly less time spent on heat detection
- Faster identification of health issues and close follow-up of sick cows' recovery
- Better supported nutrition decision making

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SYSTEM

In April 2012, Nicola Renato began using the Allflex Heatime® HR System with rumination, heat detection and cow identification functionalities. Initially, the system was used with milking and dry cows; and in January 2013, the heifers were added. "We chose Allflex's system because of the rumination, a functionality lacking in the other heat detection options," says Nicola.

Learning to use the Allflex system was quick and easy. "I understood immediately how it works and my employees learned to use it in 30 minutes. But to properly analyze the rumination alerts I needed more learning time. My staff is doing only a few things, but I'm using the system more deeply."

Nicola checks the Allflex Heatime HR System every morning and evening. "I see if there are alerts. If it's a heat alarm, I watch the graph to see how many hours I still have to inseminate the cow. If it's a health alert, I personally look at the cow and her behavior and check the milk production."

BENEFITS

With the Allflex Heatime HR System, Nicola Renato's insemination success rate has been improving. Within six months of installing the system, the dairy's average conception interval had decreased by 19 days. Also, since using Allflex's Heatime System, Nicola Renato has succeeded in inseminating all fresh cows (up to three months after calving). Previously, around 15% of fresh cows were not successfully inseminated.

With Allflex rumination monitoring, detecting sick cows and tracking their recovery is easier and more accurate. The system has also significantly reduced the amount of time the farm staff devotes to heat detection, virtually eliminating manual observation and related tasks. Instead of watching the cows multiple times during the day and checking the barn every night, Nicola now trusts the Allflex Heatime System to identify all cows in heat.

"What's more, the heifers' enclosure is now well-monitored, and I'm able to relax with full confidence in the system," Nicola says. "In general, the farm is running more efficiently."

Even with all the time savings and improved management of cow health and nutrition, Nicola says that confidence in his decision making and peace of mind are the two most important benefits that Allflex's system has brought him. With the system, Nicola feels closer to the cows and better connected to the farm. He sums this up by saying, "With Allflex's Heatime, I'm more sure of what I do." With this confidence, Nicola looks forward to increasing profits and to expanding Nicola Renato's herd size in the near future.

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