

"Dairy farming is a challenge as a whole. The Heatime Pro System is simply helping us do everything better."

Kevin van der Poel, Owner, Alkemade Dairies Ltd.

Alkemade Dairies yields more milk and creates a higher value herd with the Allflex Heatime® Pro System

BACKGROUND

Alkemade Dairies Ltd. in Ohaupo, in the Waikato area of New Zealand was acquired in 2015 by Kevin and Cherie van der Poel, after many years dairy farming in New Zealand and the US. They continue to maintain the herd of 400 Kiwi Cross milking cows, whose diet is divided evenly between grass and supplements.

CHALLENGES

Upon taking over Alkemade Dairies, Kevin felt "there was place in this industry to bring in better monitoring of our herds, using technology that reduces time-consuming tasks and allows remote access to real-time information 24/7." He also wanted to automate procedures as much as possible to keep staffing requirements down. His conclusion: "A cow monitoring solution would make us more efficient and enable better monitoring in my absence."

AT A GLANCE

Company: Alkemade Dairies Ltd.
Location: Ohaupo, Waikato, New Zealand
Herd size: 400 milking cows; Kiwi Cross (Holstein and Jersey)

Challenges

- Maximise heat identification and AI accuracy
- Increase milk production
- Automate monitoring to minimise daily involvement and reduce staffing needs
- Create a higher value herd

System

- Allflex Heatime® Pro System with HRLDn tags for real-time heat detection and health monitoring

Benefits

- Estimated 30% higher milk production
- More accurate and less labour-intensive heat detection
- Earlier diagnosis of health and feed issues facilitates faster, more effective treatment
- Extra stock to sell, with more choice of which young stock to keep
- Access to farm data from any PC enables remote management and decision-making
- Overall added value of $NZ 50,000 per year, from increased production and cost savings

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SYSTEM

Kevin purchased the Allflex Heatime Pro System with HRLDn tags within a few months of acquiring the farm. He liked the information it provided, and the fact that "it gives us rumination as well as activity monitoring, which we thought would give us great value."

The basics of the Allflex Heatime Pro System were easy to grasp from the get-go, though Kevin notes that two years in, "we're finding more and more automation in the system that we can use in our business."

Alkemade Dairies uses the Allflex Heatime Pro System differently at different times of the year. "During calving, we're monitoring rumination on the whole herd, particularly our fresh cows to see how they're progressing, making sure they've recovered before they go to the main herd," he says.

"On a general basis, throughout the year, we're looking at the health alerts, which alert us to any cows having any health issues. And at breeding time, we're looking at the Heat Report and linking our breeding program with that."

BENEFITS

The Allflex Heatime Pro System has been helpful in automating procedures and directing attention to where needed, based on any number of parameters. "The technology helps us identify which cows to look at and when to look at them, and then we do the diagnosis. It's the same with the breeding side." Kevin notes that, while the Heatime System does the identifying, good stockmanship is required in order to determine what to do with the information.

Kevin has noticed that with the Allflex system in place, heat detection is now more accurate compared with previous farms he's worked on. Instead of tail painting, data analysis is used, reducing both effort and the number of people involved, with better results.

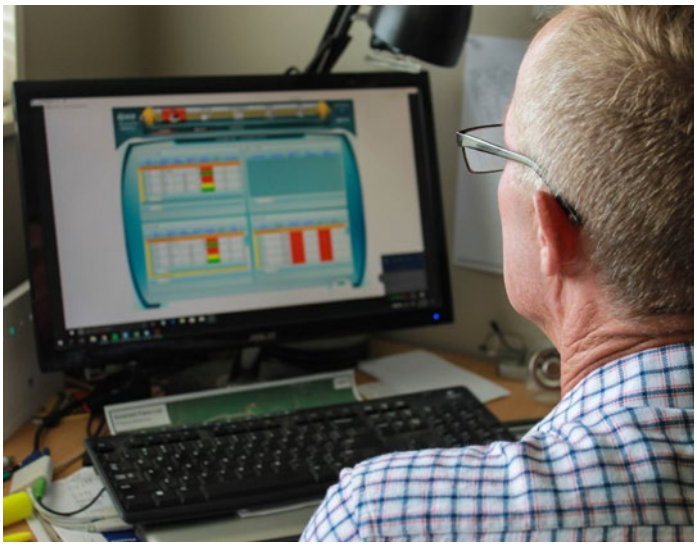
He also believes that milk production is higher than it would be without the Heatime System. "We're producing 30% extra above the previous farm record. We took over the same farm and the same cows, so I don't know how much of it is due to my management, but the system is definitely helping me achieve these high levels, without me having to be here all day or every day."

Beyond providing accurate data, the system gives Kevin nuanced insight into what is going on with his cows. "Heatime creates and stores a history for each animal, and that helps us understand her process and her breeding cycles," he says. "We can see her rumination curve, whether it's steady or not. We also compare individual cows to the herd's rumination chart and then determine our feed rations to the herd – and then take it down to the individual level based on how she's performing. It will give us an alert if a cow drops dramatically from her norm so from that we understand she's not thriving in her group, and we can take action to remedy it."

In all, Kevin attributes about $NZ 50,000 in value per year to Heatime. "We now AB (artificially breed) everything, creating a higher value in our herd. We don't need vets for pregnancy tests, which saves about $5,000 a year, and we also don't use vets to diagnose our cows. With that, our cows produce better because we diagnose our animals and treat them more effectively. It also gives us extra options, creating extra stock to sell and letting us choose which young stock to keep. Plus, we don't have the hassle with bulls, which saves work."

As desired, Kevin can also take time off from the farm, without worrying. "For example, I was recently travelling overseas and my manager wasn't sure about something, so I was able to go online and assess some individual cows and give him some assistance, verify what he needed to do."

In fact, Kevin is so satisfied with the Allflex Heatime Pro System that when he purchased a second farm nearby with 500 cows, he immediately installed the system. "Heatime will help me manage both farms without having to be there physically all the time."



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About Allflex www.allflex.global

Allflex, 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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