

Smart technology wins at Fielddays

Farmers can have an easier means of handling and sanitising cows after milking through smart technology that senses an animal's walking speed.

Rotorua company Technipharm, in conjunction with Industrial Research Limited, has developed a drafting and teat spraying system that was awarded the Innovation Centre Equipment Entry of the Year title at the 2008 Mystery Creek Fielddays.

The system can detect where a cow is as the herd files out of the milking shed and adjust automatic teat spraying for maximum effect.

Teat spraying with products that disinfect and condition after milking is a proven tool in reducing the risk of mastitis, an infection that costs dairy farmers on average around \$12,000 a year.

But Technipharm's managing director Harman Heesen says there can be a miss rate of five to ten per cent with many automatic teat spraying systems.

"Animals are not robots. When you automate something it usually delivers at regular intervals, but because cows are individual and move at different

speeds, some of the teats are missed."

Technipharm has been developing drafting and teat spraying systems over the last eight years. Two years ago the company approached IRL to help implement the concept behind Speed Sensitive Technology. Geoff Bates, manager: automation development for IRL, says it includes a micro-processing control board designed to be electronically robust, eliminating the risk of any breakage if an input, such as an electrical wire, touches an electric fence during installation, or when using mobile equipment.

The system can be used for a range of on-farm applications, as well as industry applications such as a car wash control system.

For Technipharm, IRL scientists have added unique software to create a system that can sense and monitor the speed of dairy cows as they enter the race, determining when teat spraying begins, and

which nozzle should be used to most effectively reach its target.

The same technology is also being incorporated into drafting gates to improve animal handling.

Geoff says the Speed Sensitive Draughter sorts the cows at the speed they are walking, keeping the animals calm and the herd moving. The system doesn't stress animals – the gate comes across when the cow has moved through, but it's also designed to come across quickly when they bunch up or start running."

Technipharm's research and development into the new system has also had to ensure it is affordable and will cope with a robust environment.

"In New Zealand, we can solve just about every problem you find on a farm but the trick is to deliver solutions that don't require farmers to write a big cheque and will cope with rugged conditions," says Harman.

Geoff says IRL's experience in developing technology that will cope with New Zealand condi-

tions has played a big part in the innovation. The unit housing the technology is installed in the open and is regularly washed down and subjected to rainfall and sunlight.

"Almost every business that New Zealanders get involved in takes place in a rough environment, be it on a farm, up a mountain or out in the sea. We also have to design for the impact of sunlight which is harsher here than in most parts of the world so getting the packaging right for the environment is essential."







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National Fielddays 08

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