

THERE'S HOPE YET FOR GRUMPY OLD MEN...

When it comes to milking cows, Tasmanian Bruce Faichney admits he'd become a bit of a grumpy old man. Hosting a recent CowTime Shed Shake-up helped him shake off the cobwebs and change his attitude. He's taken 20 minutes off every milking without spending a cent, or investing any time or effort. And from the smile on his face, it's clear he's not grumpy any more.

Bruce and his wife Dorrie dairy at Togari, in the Circular Head dairying region of north west Tasmania. Dorrie works off-farm (also milking cows), leaving Bruce to milk their 110 cow herd in an eight year old 16-unit swingover dairy which he describes as 'pretty well designed with a good yard.'

"Milking was taking about 25 minutes longer than the same time last year, even though we've got about the same number of cows," said Bruce.

Cow-flow into the yard and out of the dairy was fine, but for the first time, this season Bruce was finding it difficult to get the cows into the dairy.

"I had a feeling it was something to do with me because my relief milker was milking in the same time as other seasons. I thought perhaps I was just getting older and slower but the frustration was also making me crankier and I found myself using the polypipe more often," he said.

So Bruce jumped at the opportunity to host CowTime's Shed Shake-up focussing on cow-flow. The Shed Shake-up is a field day with a difference, combining lively discussion in an informal, on-farm setting with ideas from a guest speaker (CowTime's Darold Klindworth) and equipment suppliers.

"It's like a light went on when Darold asked me why I walked out to the yard from the entry end of the pit," he said.

The morning discussion had been about how to use the cows' natural instincts to encourage flow into the dairy. "What I'd been doing was putting them off.



Bruce Faichney

I was walking out straight into the cows lined up ready to enter the dairy, marching straight through them, shouting and waving the polypipe. It's no wonder they were unco-operative and moving away from the dairy entry!"

That night Bruce put the polypipe away, vowed to keep his mouth shut and resisted leaving the pit. When he did go into the yard, he entered through the back gate. At first it felt like it was taking longer but Bruce monitored milking time which was about the same as before.

"After the first week, the cows changed. They started coming in on their own and I didn't have to go out in the yard as often. Now I only go out there to put the rail up at the end of a row."

The atmosphere also changed: the dairy became a quieter, more relaxed and comfortable place – for Bruce and his cows. Within three weeks Bruce had shaved 20 minutes off each milking, bringing it in line with the relief milker and previous seasons. Bruce can't believe how much difference a change in attitude can make.

For more information phone CowTime on 03 5624 2221. CowTime is proudly supported by Dairy Australia and DPI Vic. Your Dairy Services levy making milking easier.