

## STRESS BUSTER, BEER BUSTER

CowTime's Shed Shake-up not only helped Bevan Alcock and his mother to save a day's work a week, it also proved to be a stress buster and a beer buster.

Bevan farms in partnership with his mother, Julie, cousin, Rowan and aunt, Robyn. They run a 250-cow year round calving herd, Crystal Brook, located near Bega on NSW's south coast.

Bevan and Julie do the lion's share of the milking in a 14-unit double up herringbone, built two years ago, which is set up for two milkers. Although they've been happy with the dairy design, cow flow was an underlying source of frustration.

"Not only did we have to chase the cows into the dairy, we also had to chase them on their way after exiting." said Bevan, who has always loved cows and enjoyed milking.

Julie and Bevan share the same attitude towards milking. "We have always aimed to treat our cows gently. Our goal isn't to milk as fast as possible because that's when things slip through the cracks. You only have to miss one case of mastitis or a few heats, and the time saved was a false economy."

After attending CowTime's Shed Shake-up Bevan made two simple changes that dramatically improved cow flow and virtually eliminated frustration in the dairy. "I can't believe what a difference it has made; and it didn't cost me a cent," he said.

All Bevan did was turn on a light at the dairy exit each morning milking and shut a gate on the dairy yard.

The Shed Shake-up focussed on cow behaviour and how it affects cow flow. "Basically it was about cow psychology and how we can use it to make milking easier."

Bevan realised that having two gates for the cows to enter the dairy yard meant the herd's pecking order was mixed up.



Bevan Alcock

By keeping the first gate shut, the cows now enter the yard in the order they prefer to enter the shed. This has improved cow flow into the dairy.

At the Shed Shake-up, Bevan heard that cows are very sensitive to changes in light and will avoid crossing a shadow. "In our case, that's what was stopping the cows wanting to leave the dairy. By turning on the light the shadow is gone, and the cows are happy to move away," he said.

Each milking now takes about 20 minutes less, which for two people, adds up to seven hours a week, or a day's labour. CowTime's Milking Monitor Report shows the Alcocks have improved labour efficiency by 13%, for no cost or effort.

But Bevan says the big difference is 'about three beers a night.'

"After a stressful milking, I used to need a few beers to wind down but these days I'm much more relaxed when I leave the dairy each evening. And you just can't measure the value of that!" he said.

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.

