

CowTime

CASE STUDY

Pits and People 2005



Simple warm up exercises before milking have reduced the aches and pains in Les Smith's right arm. He picked up the tip at Pits and People Shed CowTime's 2005 Shake-up.

My right arm

Les Smith says he enjoys milking most of the time. But his right arm didn't always agree, aching after milking at times. Some simple tips Les picked up at *Pits and People* – CowTime's 2005 Shed Shake-up – have made a noticeable improvement.

Les and three other employees work for Malcolm Holm and Jenny Wheeler at Pyngama, their property near Finley in the Murray Region. The split-calving herd peaks at 455 cows which are milked in a 54-stand rotary dairy.

Even though Les and Jason do the lion's share of the milking, all staff were encouraged to attend *Pits and People*. Everyone came home with different ideas to put into practice.

A breast-cancer survivor, Les had the lymph nodes removed from his right armpit a couple of years ago. This arm tended to get tired toward the end of milking. CowTime's warm up exercises struck a chord with Les.

"After surgery I was given exercises to prevent lymphoedema and taught to warm up before playing squash. So it made perfect sense when I heard CowTime's suggestion to warm up before milking," Les says.

Since then, Les has warmed up before each milking, and noticed an improvement in the stamina in his right arm.

Another idea the team picked up at *Pits and People* was to slow down the platform from about 10 minutes a rotation to 11, and not to worry if there's an occasional empty bail.

"Previously we'd stop the platform to let on a cow that hesitated. We've found it's faster to leave it running as there's a good chance another cow will fill the bail. Even with the odd one empty, it's quicker because we aren't stopping and starting the platform all the time," he says.

Les suspects fewer cows hesitate now. At *Pits and People*, we heard how 'learned behaviour' affects cows – if they know the platform will stop for them, they'll wait for it to stop."

Cow-flow at the exit has also improved since slowing down the platform.

"That extra minute gives the cows time to finish their grain and they back out without need to be chased. We've added only a few extra minutes to the total milking time but it's less stressful for cows and people," he said.

CowTime's Shed Shake-ups were brought to the Murray region by Murray Dairy.



CowTime

Pits and People 2005

CowTime is the dairy industry's national learning package to make milking easier and more productive. Each year, CowTime develops a new theme around which extension messages are delivered.

In 2005, the theme was *Pits and People*, which focused on reducing the impact of milking on the body and mind, as well as ways to improve the milking routine.

The main vehicle for delivering the messages was through CowTime's popular Shed Shake-up format, which is based on a field day with a difference. The format of *Pits and People* involved a seminar presented by one of CowTime's technical experts, a DVD and exercise session, ideas from equipment suppliers and an on-farm visit.

Across the nation, 33 *Pits and People* Shed Shake-ups were delivered, which were attended by 812 people. Evaluation data* showed:

- 96% satisfaction rate;
- 60% of attendees made changes after attending and a further 10% are planning to;
- 97% of attendees found the information useful and relevant; and
- 88% approval rating for use of levy money.

Spreading the impact

CowTime's impact on the industry goes well beyond those attending Shed Shake-ups. The show bags and information handed out on the day have been used by 62% of attendees and will support further improvements over time.

Farmers continue to use CowTime's web-based resources, particularly the Milking Monitor service, Quick Notes and Guidelines. The program also received good support from the milk harvesting service sector, with 15 dealership, technical and field officers participating in the delivery.

**More information contact CowTime on
ph (03) 5624 2221 or visit www.cowtime.com.au.**



Murray Regional Report

More than 108 people attended the six *Pits and People* Shed Shake-ups held in Undera, Finley, Kerang, Stanhope, Invergordon and Cobram. They were presented by CowTime's Darold Klindworth and organised by Northern Victorian Regional Co-ordinator, Chrysanya Robins.

Feedback* was very positive, with 95% of participants agreeing *Pits and People* was worth attending, and 97% saying the information presented was useful and practical. Like previous Shed Shake-ups, farmers attending *Pits and People* valued the new ideas and the opportunity for discussion and interaction.

Importantly, the effect of *Pits and People* goes beyond a discussion session. Most attendees (85%) from the Murray Region planned to make changes as a result of attending *Pits and People*. Changes included easing stressful situations, streamlining work routine times, and improving safety and working conditions and cow comfort.

Sponsors will be pleased to see that 89% of participants from the Murray Region approved of the use of their levy money to develop this Shed Shake-up.

CowTime was delivered in the Murray Region with support from:



* Data presented has been compiled from feedback attendance records, feedback questionnaires and follow-up interviews (conducted by independent researcher, Down to Earth Research).

