

CowTime

CASE STUDY

Pits and People 2005



The simple changes Kaye Mullins made after attending CowTime's Pits and People improved cow flow, shortened milking time and reduced daily stress levels.

Simple changes reduce stress

Allora, Queensland, dairy farmer, Kaye Mullins, says the changes introduced to the milking routine after attending *Pits and People*, CowTime's 2005 Shed Shake-up have improved cow flow, shortened milking time and reduced daily stress levels.

Kaye and her husband Tom, and sons Chris and Andrew share-farmer together on their property 'Carinya' and two adjoining properties.

At Carinya, Kaye and Chris do the milking. Together they milk 130 cows in a 14-aside herringbone swingover, taking two hours from start to finish.

Poor cow flow was the biggest source of stress during milking for Kaye. Cows would stop still and block the entrance of the dairy, preventing other cows from entering. Getting cows onto the platform was a constant chore.

So Kaye was delighted to come home from the Shed Shake-up with a multitude of ideas that she immediately implemented.

Cows now enter the dairy of their own accord in their own pecking order which has improved flow into the shed. The poly pipe is rarely used and cows don't have to be chased in as often as they used to.

If milkers need to go into the yard, they now walk out the front of the pit around to the back of the cows.

"We used to walk straight out into the cows which would actually push them further away from where we wanted them. Now we know better," she says.

Kaye also learned that by walking down one side, brushing off the teats of all cows before putting the cups

on aids milk letdown. It means the cups are off faster and the cows out sooner.

"In the past we could be waiting for half a minute for milk to start flowing. Now by the time the cups go on, the milk is ready to go," Kaye says.

Kaye also realised that one slow quarter could hold up all the cows and now takes the cups off when this happens.

"We were over-milking three quarters trying to milk out the slow one. It held up all the cows in the bails and those still to be milked," she says.

As a result of some simple changes to the routine, milking time has been reduced and cow flow has improved, making milking not such an arduous task for Kaye and her family.

"The Shed Shake-up was great value. I really liked the on-farm dairy visit because we got to see the good and bad points in dairy design. Discussing problems with other farmers is a good way to find a solution," she says.

CowTime's Shed Shake-up was brought to Queensland by Sub Tropical Dairy and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries.



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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.



Queensland Regional Report

More than 102 people attended the four Queensland *Pits and People* Shed Shake-ups held in Bye, Emu Vale, Tamrookum and Malanda. They were presented by CowTime's Darold Klindworth and organised by Queensland Regional Co-ordinator, John Miller.

Feedback* was very positive, with 100% of participants agreeing *Pits and People* was worth attending, and 100% 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. Almost three out of every four attendees (73%) from Queensland 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 Queensland participants approved of the use of their levy money to develop this Shed Shake-up.

CowTime was delivered in Queensland 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).

