

CowTime

CASE STUDY

Pits and People 2005



Paul Schofield saved a day's labour a week after attending Pits and People, CowTime's 2005 Shed Shake-up.

Talking saves you time

Paul Schofield went home from *Pits and People* – CowTime's 2005 Shed Shake-up – with two simple ideas. They resulted in reduced milking times, equivalent to a day's labour a week – at no cost!

Paul dairies with his parents, Stan and Narelle, at Willow Vale in Kangaloon New South Wales. Paul and Stan take about 2.5 hours to milk and clean up after 130 cows in a 12-aside herringbone.

With Sydney suburbs moving further out, land around the Kangaloon district is becoming increasingly more valuable. Dairy farms in the area are few and far between as more and more sell up.

When Paul heard about the Shed Shake-up in his area he was keen to attend.

"There aren't many dairy farmers around this way and the event was being held in a new dairy, so I thought it would be a good opportunity to have a look at it as well as catch up with some other dairy farmers," Paul says.

Although he learnt a lot from the formal sessions, Paul says he gained the most from the farmer discussions and walk through of the host's new dairy.

"While talking to farmers, someone suggested that we let the cows out as soon as they've finished rather than making them wait until we've cupped the other side. We tried this and have knocked about 15 minutes off each milking," Paul says.

Across a week, this small saving each milking adds up to 3.5 hours each to Paul and Stan, or a day's labour between them.

"It's amazing the number of ideas you pick up when you walk through someone else's dairy and talk to other farmers about what they're doing at their places," Paul says.

While walking through the host's dairy Paul noticed that the farmer had a gate hinged differently. He went home and cut in half the gate at the front of his dairy, reangling it as he had seen done at the Shed Shake-up.

"The cows now come in a lot more smoothly which makes me a bit calmer," he says .

The changes Paul made after attending the Shed Shake-up cost nothing, yet have reduced milking time and improved cow flow.

CowTime's Shed Shake-up was brought to New South Wales by DIDCO.



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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.



NSW Regional Report

More than 130 people attended the four NSW *Pits and People* Shed Shake-ups held in Burrawang, Canowindra, Singleton and Denman. They were presented by CowTime's Darold Klindworth and NSW Regional Co-ordinator, Tony Dowman.

Feedback* was very positive, with 94% of participants agreeing *Pits and People* was worth attending, and 96% 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 four out of every five attendees (78%) from NSW 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 87% of NSW participants approved of the use of their levy money to develop this Shed Shake-up.

CowTime was delivered in NSW with support from:



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

