

CowTime

CASE STUDY

Pits and People 2005



Since attending Pits and People, CowTime's 2005 Shed Shake-up, Graeme and Katrina Arnold have found that the cows are calmer, the people happier and milking is faster.

Calm cows – calm dairy

It wasn't that long ago that Graeme Arnold dreaded milking time. Attending *Pits and People*, CowTime's latest Shed Shake-up, inspired Graeme to make a few simple changes. Since then, life in the dairy is now far more pleasant for both Graeme and his cows.

Constantly pushing cows into and out of the dairy, even though they were feeding in the bail, was taking its toll on Graeme's patience. So when he heard about a coming CowTime Shed Shake-up he knew he had to attend.

In partnership with his parents, Graeme and his wife Katrina milk up to 200 cows on their property, Torwood, near Launceston, in a 15 unit swing-over dairy.

The cows were extremely reluctant to enter the bails, and after milking it was almost as hard to get them to leave and return to the paddock. The milking environment was anything but calm with the yelling and rapping of polypipe.

"It really was a 'three beers after milking' type situation because it was such a chore," Graeme says.

After attending a CowTime Shed Shake-up Graeme was more able to see things from the cows' perspective. He has since made a few minor adjustments to the dairy and the way he milks which have transformed the dairy into a calm milking environment.

He summarises the difference as handling the cows in a calm and consistent way.

"I'm no longer charging into the yard in the cows' faces. If I have to go out, I approach them from the right angles. The poly's gone and both the milkers and I make a conscious effort not to yell any more," he says.

These small changes improved the atmosphere of the dairy very quickly. "The cows are a lot calmer when they come in and the people are also happier," Graeme says.

As an added bonus, they have shortened milking time. "Because the cows are in a calmer state when the cups go on, they milk out faster. As soon as they cups go on they're ready to go. We can get the milk out faster, cups off quicker and have them back in the paddock eating sooner," he said.

Graeme and his milkers' routine is something that they stick to – a system that everyone does the same. They feel that if they can get cows used to one system, things are going to be much smoother.

"Our new heifers don't know what things used to be like. They've always been handled in a proper manner and behave much better than the older cows," he says.

For Graeme milking is now far more pleasant and not so much a chore.

"I now spend less time in the dairy and less time yelling at cows. My cows are happier, I'm happier and my people are happier and it didn't take too many changes," he says.

CowTime's Shed Shake-up were brought to Tasmania by DairyTas and DPIW&E.



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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.**



Tasmania Regional Report

More than 71 people attended the four Tasmanian *Pits and People* Shed Shake-ups held in Legerwood, Dairy Plains, South Forest and King Island. They were presented by CowTime's Darold Klindworth and organised by Tasmanian Regional Co-ordinator, Lesley Irvine.

Feedback* was very positive, with 96% 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 three out of every four attendees (71%) from Tasmania 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 88% of Tasmanian participants approved of the use of their levy money to develop this Shed Shake-up.

CowTime was delivered in Tasmania 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).

