

Tailor-made management services drive today's high performance cows

Top gear cow management

Cow management is a complex business these days and while off the shelf management services will do the basics they won't offer the flexibility and efficiency needed to get the best out of today's high performance herds. NMR has responded by developing a broad ranging portfolio of services that it will promote at the Dairy Event and Livestock Show this year. Here's a preview.

text **Karen Wright**

It's not just yield and quality, but disease status, health and welfare of the herd that all affect the bottom line. And, increasingly, milk buyers and consumers want to know these criteria are getting the attention they deserve on farm.

Responding to these demands – on and beyond the farm, has lead NMR to develop services that don't just 'tick the boxes' but provide valuable herd information for producers, milk buyers and advisers. And these developments have avoided extra hassle – often there are no more data or milk samples required and little extra cost. Here are a few common scenarios seen on UK dairy farms and how NMR managers would suggest using the 'tools of the trade' to tackle them.

“Our calving interval has been creeping up in recent years and we are missing too many heats. I've tried to spend

more time observing the cows but it's just not practical with everything else that needs doing around the farm.”

“Our high production cows do not always show strong signs of heat and, coupled with larger herd sizes and limited labour, it is not surprising that many producers struggle with fertility issues.”

“NMR's Silent Herdsman, introduced this year, can make a real difference. It is the most advanced electronic heat detection system available and uses a robust collar that has a processor that continuously monitors and analyses all motion behaviour in 3D.”

“The collar has the ability, through the processor, to communicate with a farm base station by radio and wirelessly. Information is reliably passed to the farm PC 24/7. In trials Silent Herdsman collars have shown accuracy rates of 86% confirmed by progesterone sampling, significantly higher than



Silent Herdsman can make a real difference to fertility

previous devices that the researchers have investigated.”

“Silent Herdsman includes a package of collars, the base station and the PC with Silent Herdsman software.”

Maurice Hart, NMR Silent Herdsman sales (southern region)

“Mastitis incidence has been much higher than we are comfortable with for a few months now and our milk recording results show several persistent high cell count cows. I need a simple method to get to the bottom of the problem so the vet can help me to treat them appropriately and successfully.”

“Thanks to NMR Mastitis Tracker, to be launched at the Dairy Event and

Livestock Show, we have an accurate method of identifying the mastitis-causing pathogens using PCR technology. It gives an accurate breakdown of the bacteria in the sample as part of routine cow management and integrates the results with the NMR cell count records. PCR technology, which looks at the DNA of mastitis pathogens, can be carried out on preserved samples – a distinct advantage over culture tests that require fresh milk samples.”

“It's the simplicity of the Mastitis Tracker service that appeals to producers and vets – they just include a Mastitis Tracker test request form with the milk samples at the time of recording, then once the sample has been through the NMR milk quality testing lab it is sent on to the PCR lab with minimum delay. Results are reported back through the Herd Companion web site within 24 hours of the sample arriving at the lab or by fax or post.”

“Mastitis Tracker will pick up more than 95% of mastitis causing bacteria and it means that trends can be identified and cases treated far more accurately – even taking into account penicillin resistant strains of bacteria. Mastitis Tracker costs £13 - £14 per sample plus VAT depending on volumes tested.”

Alison Thomas, northern area field business manager

“We've finally committed to investing in the expansion of our dairy herd and are looking at buying in heifers. Both our vet and milk purchaser have recommended we undertake regular surveillance to ensure we are not left exposed to diseases like Johne's.”

“They're offering you good advice! And it was demand from vets that was behind the development of NMR's HerdWise

Johne's screening programme. Milk samples taken for milk recording are used every quarter to test for Johne's disease. In addition, Lepto, BVD, IBR, Liver Fluke and Neospora are also offered as part of an ad-hoc HealthCheck service.”

“No extra sampling is required for producers wishing to use milk samples for disease management. Once producers are enrolled onto the HerdWise service the samples are automatically directed for Johne's testing on a quarterly basis and results are available from NMR's Herd Companion web site. This site holds a log of previous Johne's tests along with other health and fertility data so it can determine the disease status of each cow.”

“It's a cost-effective and reliable way of picking up problems early, evaluating the prevalence of the disease within the herd and in implementing control measures.”

“Based on the Danish Johne's control programme, Herdwise has provided a completely new system for the management of Johne's disease in the dairy herd. Many vets now incorporate this as part of a total herd health package.”

Hannah Pearce, NMR business development manager

“Our bulk milk fat results dropped a couple of months ago and now my SCC results are high. I'm finding it very difficult to manage these issues with just one test result a week from my buyer.”

“Why not give NML MilkCheck a try. For most producers, a milk sample is taken from the bulk tank at every collection – only one a week is tested for payment purposes so the others are available for



Daily milk quality results through MilkCheck with no extra sampling

MilkCheck which is a regular – daily or every other day – set of results for fat, protein, cell count and bactoscan. These are reported using your normal milk buyer notification method and within 24 hours of the sample leaving the farm.”

“Some producers are encouraged by their milk buyers to use MilkCheck, perhaps if there's been a quality problem. And once producers start using it, many get 'hooked' appreciating that the cost of extra tests is minimal – between £2 and £5 per test depending on volumes – compared with the possible penalties they could incur from dropping into a lower payment band.”

Bec Bell, NML business development executive

Visit NMR at the Dairy Event and Livestock Show on stand BM 226 in the Business Management Zone

