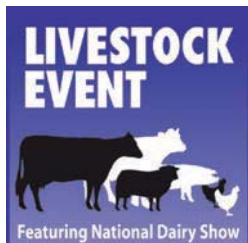


Robots to take centre stage at Livestock 2014

# Robot display a world first



[www.livestockevent.co.uk](http://www.livestockevent.co.uk)

As the 2014 Livestock show looms, producers from across the country are making appointments and planning which stands to visit at the two-day show. CowManagement had a sneaky peak at some of the new and innovative features and products that will be on display.

text **Ben Pike & Rachael Porter**

It's a world first for visitors to this year's Livestock Event. A live robotic milking and feeding system will be operating throughout the two-day show, organised by the RABDF, at the NEC in Birmingham on July 2 and 3.

"There's a lot of interest in robots and this demonstration will be working on both days with 40 cows being robotically milked and fed," said RABDF Event's chief executive Nick Everington. The showpiece attraction, which will be run by Lely, will be supported by stands

from automated milking systems specialists such as GEA Technologies, BouMatic and DeLaval. BouMatic will be showcasing its single and double milking robot, which milks between the back legs of the cow rather from the side.

The company's Marianne Blaauw said the method keeps cows calmer during milking and the position of the arm makes it difficult for them to kick the cup off.

The double milking robot – the MR-D1 – takes two cows at a time and can handle around 3,500 litres per day. It's targeted at herds of around 100 cows and costs £90,000. Two single robots from BouMatic, to service 120 cows, would cost around £120,000.

DeLaval will be showcasing its Clover milking liner that has been designed to rival the triangular-shaped liners, which have increased in popularity, and the traditional round shape.

The company says that triangular liners can create air gaps between the rubber and the teat and that they don't milk as quickly as round liners, while the clover design eliminates this problem.



## Tickets and travel arrangements

**Tickets:** Pre-book on line and take advantage of discounted rates.  
[www.livestockevent.co.uk](http://www.livestockevent.co.uk)

### Travel:

By train or plane: 10 minutes walk from Birmingham International railway station and airport

By car: straight off the M6 or M42 to free parking.

By coach FREE of charge. RABDF supported by the Livestock Auctioneers Association, is offering free coach travel from 34 auction marts across the country to coincide with the event opening times. To take advantage of the offer, purchase an online ticket for £20, the same as gate price.

For full details and how to book see [www.livestockevent.co.uk/book-tickets](http://www.livestockevent.co.uk/book-tickets).

## Lean management for big improvements

DairyCo will be using the show to promote a new approach to managing a farm business.

The levy-funded body has been trialling Lean Management – a programme focused on minimising waste and maximising output – with more than 20 dairy producers.

The scheme sees producers working one-on-one with consultants to evaluate every aspect of production within the business, with the aim of finding efficiencies that improve net profit.

DairyCo's Rachel Chamberlayne said that, during the trials, producers had seen improvements equivalent to

between 5ppl and 7ppl. "The scheme is for the most progressive dairy producers who want to challenge themselves," she said.

She reported that the approximate costs of the scheme were around £8,000 in year one and £5,000 in year two.

## Stay one step ahead

Footcare will form an important part of the 2014 show. Visitors will be given the chance to take part in interactive foot scoring and a number of stands will be offering new products to improve footcare on farm.

Jan van Wyhe-Storgaard said that for a long-term strategy to reduce lameness, producers should consider products that prevent infection rather than waiting for problems to occur and treating chronic cases.

His Red Agron product, sold under the Vitfoss brand, helps a scab to form over any wounds on the cow's hoof, helping the natural healing process to repair the foot. It can be used in a parlour spray or footbath.

Mr van Whye-Storgaard said that traditional footcare solutions concentrate on killing the bacteria but not repairing the wound.

For effective treatment producers are advised to use the product intensively on chronic foot problems to start the healing process, but once a black scab



has formed over the foot to use it just once or twice a week as a maintenance tool.

Using Red Agron on an on-going basis costs around £15 per cow. Treatment of existing foot conditions will push that figure higher.

### Smart spraying

A new way to treat feet, particularly in robotic parlours, will be showcased at the show by Agrihealth.

The Vink Spraymat, engineered in the Netherlands, comprises four sections of rubber mats with eight buttons on each mat. When the buttons are depressed by the weight of a cow walking on it, the valve beneath it shoots a liquid foot-care solution and water up into and onto the hoof.

Distributor Robert Houlbrooke said that what the system offers is a clean shot of treatment every time the cow walks on the mat because the solution can't be contaminated.

"This is particularly useful for robotic systems, because the race after the robot is short. The mats have been designed to fit around that. Each is 80cm by 40cm and they can link together."

The mats are connected to mains water at a constant 30PSI pressure and also draw in the producer's chosen foot-care solution.

The ingredients are mixed inside the mat before being squirted.

Mr Houlbrooke said that the product would last for at least five years with cows passing over it four or five times a day. Four mats cost £1,850.



## A firmer footing in cow housing

Northern Ireland-based Moore Concrete will unveil slatted flooring with a new rough surface, which it says improves cows' grip at housing.

The Surefoot pre-cast concrete slat has the fines removed to produce a very shallow cobbled effect on the surface. The company's Keri McGivern said the rough top didn't have an abnormal

effect on hoof wear and that trials had shown that cows have a longer, more confident stride length.

"It's fair to say that their stride on our slat is as long as it would be on rubber," she said, adding that in tests it was 9cm longer on the rough surface than on a typical brushed-concrete finish.

"A brush finish is the norm for most

slatted systems, but over time a scraper will take the top off it and it becomes slippery."

The apparent improvement does come at a price.

The product is £7 a square metre more than a brushed finished slat and it can't be retro-fitted, meaning producers must start with new slats.



## There's an app for that

Feed supplier KW is launching a mobile phone app for its customers.

Downloadable for free from the Google Play Store, 'KW My Orders' allows customers to instantly access their account to see how much feed they have left on contract with the company and view when deliveries are due to be made.

Orders for more feed cannot be placed using the app just yet, but the company is planning further developments in the future.



## Simple, but effective 'bucket' ID system

Vet Graham Shepherd has gone back to basics to try to find a solution to a problem faced by many producers and calf rearers. He is launching a simple identification system to ensure that calves are given the correct feed.

Producers can now buy three-handled buckets – each with a different coloured lid – to be able to quickly distinguish between milk from a cow treated with antibiotics, colostrum, milk for calf feeding, and waste milk.

"Buckets with a yellow lid could be for colostrum, while the white-lidded buckets could be used to store milk for the calves.

"The bucket with the red lid would be used for milk deemed unfit for calf consumption," he said.

Mr Shepherd added that despite the simplicity of the concept, he was unaware of any suitable alternatives on the market.

Each bucket with a lid and handle costs £10.



## Competition to name portable milking machine

Equipment supplier Dairy Spares is inviting producers to enter a competition to name a portable milking machine, which has a modern and ergonomic design compared to other machines of this kind, at this year's show.

The portable milker, which will make its market debut at the show, is manufactured from re-cycled plastic by Italian company Interpuls.

Fitted with a 20-litre vacuum tank, it is lightweight and its design makes it easy to use. It is ideal for milking cows at shows and invalid cows on the farm. The portable milker costs £1,350+VAT.

Visitors to the Dairy Spares stand at the Livestock Event can enter the competition to name this 'designer' machine from Italy, or visit the Dairy Spares website.

The prize is £200 of vouchers to spend on Dairy Spares' parlour equipment. The winner will be announced at the end of July.



## Cow calcium supplement



A new system for delivering calcium to cows pre-calving, with a product that contains 40% more calcium than most bolus-type supplements, will be launched by Animax.

Easycal is the culmination of two years of comprehensive research and farm trials by the Suffolk-based company.

Calcium is contained in a small, egg-shaped pump and is delivered to cows orally through an attached-hook applicator.

The product, designed to reduce the risk of milk fever in calving cows, is small enough to fit in a pocket and is different to calcium boluses, which must be administered with an applicator gun.

Another factor that sets the product

apart from eroding boluses is the level of calcium it contains, according to the company's vet Les Porter.

"The product is a liquid solution, containing 60g of calcium. At this level, the calcium is 40% greater than you would find in most calcium boluses," he explains.

"There is a growing demand for calcium products, but these can be bulky because calcium is a macro element and, therefore, a high dose is needed."

Once administered, the calcium solution is effective for between 12 and 15 hours.

It should be used to balance the sudden drop in blood calcium levels at or around calving.

## Hoof care disinfectant

Rumenco division Nettex will launch a footbath product at the Livestock Event as part of its developing Progiene dairy hygiene range.

Digicur™ Footbath is a fast-acting broad-spectrum disinfectant based on glutaraldehyde plus QAC biocides with proven efficacy against known bacterial challenges that can lead to hoof disorders.

It is free from formalin, copper and other heavy

metals and is formulated with high levels of surfactants, to ensure hoof cling and penetration to maximise effectiveness. The disinfectant can also be used at a low concentration (1% solution), yet still retains activity with high hoof soil loads. And its low pH inhibits bacterial growth, even at low temperatures.

The product is available in 25-, 200- and 1,000-litre packs from the agricultural merchant trade.

