

Herd data 'on the run' offers scope to tighten up daily cow management

Mobile management – the way forward

It's not just the city slickers that use 'apps' and mobile phones to stay at the top of their game. Dairy producers are doing the same. The arrival of mNMR six months ago – the 'm' being 'mobile' – is bringing essential data right to the 'coal face', be that the parlour, the collecting yard or the calving pen.

text **Karen Wright**

How useful is it being able to check details on a bulling cow in the yard? Or get milk quality details while you're milking? This is exactly what some producers are now doing, thanks to smart phones and the new – and first of its kind – mNMR.

"We've developed the mobile website mNMR and the software Pocket Companion that accesses vital herd details that are needed on a day-to-day basis," says NMR's Justin Frankfort.

"It's easy to use, free to all producers and has just the information that we know herd staff need while they're on the move. The essentials are a smart phone – iPhone, Blackberry or in fact any android or Windows7 phone – and internet

access. Most rely on 3G internet which is widely available across the UK."

Before developing Pocket Companion, NMR looked at the traffic on its web-based Herd Companion site and analysed which reports – including the iReports – were visited most frequently.

"Pocket Companion must have key management data that is quickly accessible and immediately beneficial to producers – and their vets and advisers – as they are working with the cows. These were earmarked for including in Pocket Companion."

Main gateway

One producer who has welcomed the new development is Rob Sercombe who runs

his family's dairy unit near Lutterworth in Leicestershire. He admits that he is getting increasingly dependent on his iPhone as the main gateway to his cow records.

"You see a cow bulling and you immediately need to know when she calved, if she's due for serving and how many times she's been served. I now get all this from my phone within 30 seconds. It's far quicker and much more reliable than remembering her number and waiting until you get to the office – all sorts can have happened by then."

And Rob says the past six months has seen great improvements in Pocket Companion that has made it even more invaluable. "At first we got 30 cows on one screen and scrolled through to find the one we wanted. That was a bit long-winded and slower than the updated system

"Now I type in her line number and straight away I get just her details in sections – health, production, fertility. It's so quick through the 3G network. All I do is access mNMR that's listed in my favourites and I'm there – no log in or password every time I go onto the site."

Rob and his father Brian run a 200-cow high performance Holstein herd. Gold



Keith Scott: "Within 10 minutes of getting my latest NMR results I can be treating a high cell count cow "



Rob Sercombe: "Checking bulling cows when you see them is far more reliable than waiting until I'm back in the office"

Cup qualifiers for the past two years, the herd averages 9,500kg on twice-a-day milking. Cows are run as one group, fed a TMR through winter, and then grazed during summer.

"We get good yields from our system," adds Rob, "But it does mean that we have to keep the cows fit and healthy. This is a requirement of our Arla Tesco contract so we've plenty of incentives to get it right."

For these reasons Rob is on the ball when it comes to milk quality. "Within 24 hours of recording I get a text to say my NMR results are on Pocket Companion so I'm straight in there and looking at individual cell counts. We are running at about 200,000 cells/ml at the moment, no thanks to last year's wet summer, and we have to keep under 250,000. So I want to pick up any problem cows as quickly as I can."

Access to Johne's Herdwise test results is a real advantage too. "If a cow starts calving I can quickly check through mNMR if she's a Johne's infected cow and move her. Being able to look at her and access her records on the spot is great."

Results on the spot

Another Pocket Companion enthusiast is Keith Scott who manages the 200-cow herd at Maunditts Park Farm, near Chippenham in Wiltshire. This mainly Holstein cow herd, with some Brown Swiss, are calving all year round and milk is sold on a liquid contract with penalties imposed for cell counts above 200,000/ml. "I like to know the herd's milk quality daily, but I'm particularly keen to get

NMR test results for individual cows as soon as possible," says Keith.

And access to this information has superseded all expectations thanks to Keith's iPhone and Pocket Companion. "For the past six months I've been getting a text to say my latest NMR results are ready to view 24 hours after the recording each month. I'm normally milking when this happens so within minutes I'm looking at each cow's results. I scan all the cell counts and if there's a high reading and I haven't milked that particular cow yet I will carry out a California Milk Test as she's milked and treat an affected quarter.

"So within 10 minutes of me getting the results a high cell count cow could have been identified and treated."

High speed

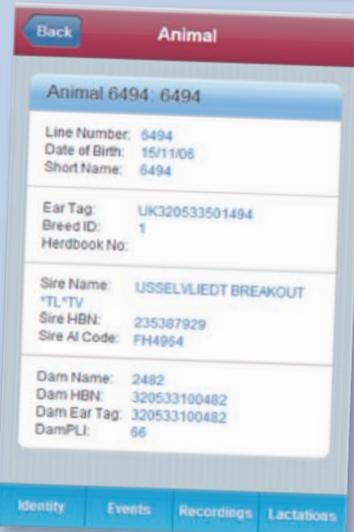
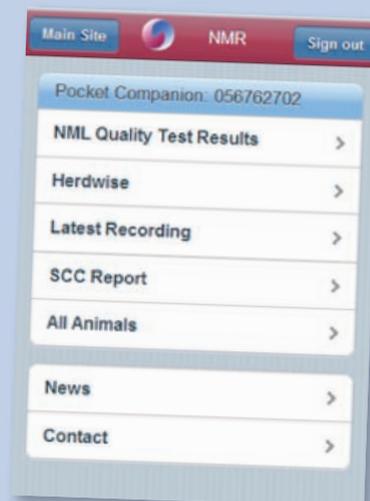
Keith reflects back on just a year ago when he would have to refer to the office PC for the latest results then check cows at the next milking – further back it could be days before treatment rather than hours.

"The quicker we can identify any problems the better. Our cell count averages 160,000/ml and we don't want to get near 200,000 and risk penalties."

Equally convenient is the simple access to lifetime daily yields in this herd that averages 8,000kg of milk on a TMR ration. "We've got two breeds here and we're looking at improving longevity, fertility and yields so it's very useful to look at the cow and her records simultaneously – it builds a clearer picture," adds Keith. |

Three steps to mNMR

1. Type m.nmr.co.uk into the phone browser.
2. Input Herd Companion User name and password – free from NMR.
3. Access herd and cow data including:
 - NML payment test results – past 12 tests
 - Johne's test results
 - Cell counts – short list of highest cell count animals
 - Last NMR recording for each cow



Line	SCC	%Tot	Prev	x>200	Lac	DMI
0548	3891++	8	1498	4	1	114
7622	2912	10		1	3	26
0096	2182+	8	46	1	5	87
0593	2168	6	350	2	1	43
0477	1849++	4	453	4	1	127
0747	1350++	2	1115	6	5	163
7587	1279++	3	950	5	3	230
0749	1063+	3	89	1	5	143
0075	884+	4	14	1	2	51
8080	866+	1	167	1	2	280
6433	862	1	304	6	2	460
8043	765	2	526	6	2	236