

Dairy links create well-oiled hub

Why have parlour and monitoring devices operating in splendid isolation? Far better to link them into one dairy hub, reduce duplication and have the most current and comprehensive management information in the office and out on farm. We look at one system that ticks all the boxes.

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The Uniform Agri dairy management system set out to be a premium dairy data hub and to link technologies. Set up in the late 1980s by a Dutch team and continuously developed during the past three decades to work alongside more advanced parlour systems, monitoring and recording systems, the now global team fully appreciates the need to link all the data and turn it into accurate, reliable and practical management material.

“The success of the Uniform system – that is now in 70 countries with more than 10,000 dairy producer users – is that it is developed by people with real knowledge in dairying and real knowledge in IT,” says Uniform’s Graham Nowell, who manages the UK office with a team of six from new premises at Sedgemoor Auction Market. “We’ve developed a number of interfaces with all the main parlour systems and activity monitors,” he says. “And we are constantly updating the links. This has cut out tiresome duplication. No other system links to so many data recording components commonly used on dairy units.”

Uniform is also updating its reports to meet new

demands, such as those for medicine reporting, and for meeting farm assurance standards.

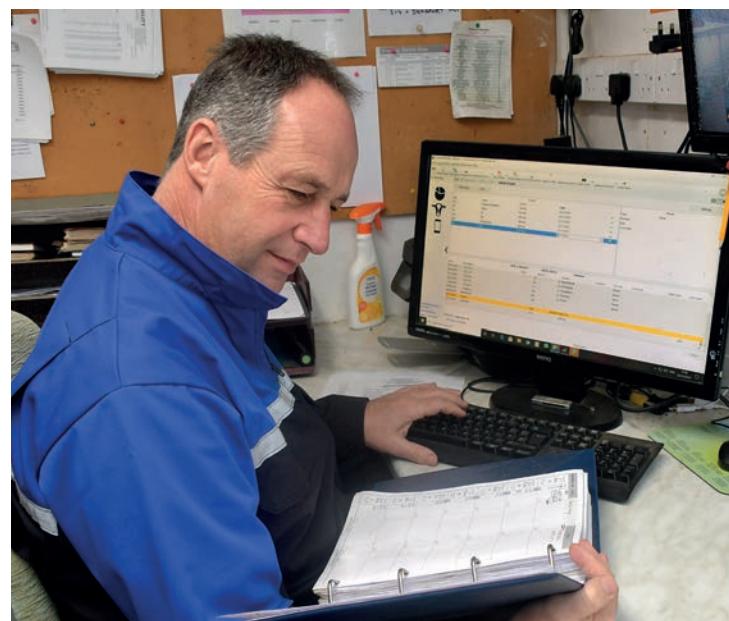
Dashboard ‘snapshot’

“It takes on the dairy herd admin, with milk records, heat and fertility data and production information analysed within one program and providing real time action lists,” he adds. “And the dashboard – or home page – is a key feature that all users like as it gives a snapshot of the herd situation. It’s ideal for a busy unit.”

Validation is a strong feature in Uniform. “It won’t let you put in a cow that’s just calved if she’s already calved within the possible time frame for example. This sort of in-built scrutiny adds to the system’s robustness.”

Uniform has recently updated its reporting to be more akin to the Red Tractor scheme – a scheme that most of

Neil Christensen: inputting cow events that link with parlour, Heatime and NMR data on the Uniform system



Uniform dashboard gives an up-to-date snapshot of the herd situation



producers are in. "Increasingly, farm assurance scheme operators are encouraging producers to get Uniform to manage their records."

The two-way flow of information maintains the current status of data with inputted cow information, such as calvings, being relayed back to the milk records. "The information is current and that's what producers like," adds Mr Nowell.

Forging more links has been possible with the recent introduction of Uniform Pro Consultant. "It's a third-party link that the vet or adviser subscribes to. With the producer's permission, the on-farm data is available to the third party."

A real jewel in the crown is the Uniform app, which works off or on line and on an android or iPhone. "This is an instant 'hit', particularly where the signal isn't good," says Mr Nowell.

Action lists and Vetcheck reports 'sync' onto the phone from the office PC or laptop and can then be accessed around the farm or in the fields – anywhere for that matter. And event information can be added. Once users are back where there's a WiFi signal they can press a button. "It's as easy as that to sync the new data back to the main hub. 'Sync and refresh, then you're done for the day' is what we remind users."

Communal hub

Uniform has proved itself as a labour-saving device on one Somerset-based dairy unit. Equally important, though, says producer Neil Christensen, who owns the Steanbow herd near Shepton Mallet, is that it's allowed him and his team to keep on top of managing the 650-cow pedigree Holstein herd.

The Uniform program runs off the main PC in the dairy office and it's a hub in every sense of the word. It's where data is input; this is Neil's job, and one he likes to do as it keeps him right up to date with the herd's progress. It's also where his dairy team come for action lists and data relating to their specific responsibilities, such as fertility actions and drying off lists.

Uniform provides a hub of current herd information for the Steanbow team



"I input all the events data – usually daily," says Neil. "It doesn't take long – even if I've a few days to catch up on. The herd calves year round so the amount of information is fairly constant."

Four staff work with Neil on the dairy unit and they will refer to the Uniform reports daily to pick up details of cows needing attention and to collect the latest management reports.

Neil installed Uniform in 2016 after looking around for a system that would interface with the Heatime activity system, NMR and the unit's GEA parlour.

"We were collecting a lot of valuable information and I needed it 'all under one roof' and in one system," says Neil. "I looked at systems that could do this and the same name, Uniform, kept cropping up."

Helped along with great support from NMR's software trainer Cath Smith and the Uniform office, Neil admits he enjoys using the system.

'App' appeal

"We're taking advantage of the app too," he adds. "We can see reports and current cow information on our phones as we're among the cows. Validation is good, so we can be fairly confident we're seeing up-to-date and accurate information."

But there's always more to learn and for the team at Steanbow that will begin with making better use of the medicine book, starting with scanning in medicines and keeping track on line of usage.

"This, and a lot of other information, on the system helps us with our Red Tractor requirements. It reduces duplication and makes it easy both for herdsmen and for me in the farm office. And it's reduced a lot of the manual data input between systems.

"We'd struggle without Uniform now. We run a high-input herd, housed all year and on three-times-a-day milking – averaging about 12,000kg. We need an integrated system that pulls all our data together. We've got to be at the top of our game and keep on target to achieve the best from the herd." |

Cow records are viewed and events added on the hoof using the Uniform app

