

Animal Health

System counters mastitis scourge

TONY HOPKINSON

MASTITIS is effectively being countered on a Waikato farm by a Corkill Systems milk pump controller and Varivac vacuum pump controller.

Steven Robb and wife Cindy farm 3km north of Morrinsville in a drought prone area. They farm for this weather pattern but the last three seasons have been severe.

"We have had three droughts in a row and they have been followed with little winter rain and this has made farming difficult," says Steven.

Steven and Cindy are the third generation on the 80ha farm, with a 18ha run-off two kilometres away. The run-off is used to grow maize and carry some dry stock during the winter.

The farm milks up to 300 Friesian cows on seasonal supply and 50 cows supplying winter milk. They have milked up to 160 cows through the winter but have had to reduce numbers after the effects of the recent

droughts. The farm supplies Open Country Cheese.

"The premiums they pay for milk supplied in the months of March, April, May and June certainly make it worthwhile."

Farming for the drought means making as much silage as possible before the weather turns dry, using all

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the maize harvested from the run-off and feeding a PKE based meal mix in the shed.

Six years ago they replaced the herring bone dairy with a 30 bail rotary and immediately ran into some major issues with mastitis.

"In the herringbone shed we had low cell count figures and then this hit me."

The rotary manufacturer assured Robb their machine and installation were OK and suggested the cause was

something else.

"I talked to many so-called experts seeking help and no one could help us out of our problems."

The mastitis problem grew and at one stage the farm was milking 250 cows and 150 cows were being treated for mastitis.

Then a recommendation from a neighbour prompted them to install the Corkill equipment.

The milk pump speed is controlled by a float switch with the speed adjusting to the amount of milk in the receiving can. This reduces damage to the milk and improves cooling performance with a regular milk delivery.

This pump controller, invented by Steve Corkill, has been used in New Zealand dairy sheds for 21 years. Varivac controls vacuum pump speed.

The speed of the pump increases as vacuum is needed and the pumps slows down when there is adequate vacuum reserve. This gives a smooth, gentle vacuum through the milking



Steven Robb, Morrinsville.

plant to the cow's teats. It will work on any existing vacuum pump.

The equipment was installed half way through a season but Robb immediately noticed some difference.

"The shed was quieter, the cows more placid and the mastitis and cell count started to improve."

During the recently completed season the cell count averaged 100,000 and he has only had to treat

10 animals.

"I was telling a friend how pleased I was with the results and he was sceptical. I said I had had some major problems, installed a Varivac and the problems have gone."

Corkill Systems guarantees – in writing – an improvement in somatic cell count with Varivac.

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