



CASE STUDY

Rhonda and Steven Bamford

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Farm size: 800 hectares

Location: Warepa – South of Balclutha

920 Jersey Herd

Challenges

- Time pressures on Rhonda during mating
- Achieving work life balance

Benefits

- No longer solely reliant on Rhonda's time during mating
- Spend less on straws
- Access to accurate, reliable information
- Early detection of cows who are under pressure
- Allows time to focus on their goal of achieving an empty rate of 5%

“People, production and profit.” And in that order is what drives Rhonda and Steven Bamford – owners of a 920-jersey herd in Warepa.

They pride themselves on putting a focus on their people first, using technology to help provide them and their team a work-life balance. Their closed system Hillfoot Farm spring calves and is currently enjoying the benefits the Allflex Monitoring system is providing them and their stock.

The decision to invest in collar technology was an easy one. Both Rhonda and Steven had previously investigated the technology and it was their relationship with the local retail supply store rep which played a strong role in the decision to invest in Allflex collaring. “We know Allflex is a trusted brand with experienced people. We wanted to work with good people and a tried and trusted company”. “Our local supply store rep knew we were early adopters to tech and that we were looking for ways to take the pressure off Rhonda and not be so reliant on her during mating. As Rhonda says, “You never know what’s around the corner”.

The collars were a substantial investment for the Bamford's, but “what price do you put on your health and wellbeing?” said Rhonda. The collars measure rumination amongst other indicators which provide the optimal time for artificially inseminating a cow. Each morning a Heat Report is produced



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and sent to the drafting gate, and during the milking the cows that are on that report are automatically drafted out ready for the AI technician. Rhonda no longer spends 4-5hrs in the shed visually eyeballing each cow and selecting those that are showing signs on bulling. "Having the collars is a massive time saver, I now can spend that time focusing on other farm jobs". The data the collars collect only keeps getting better each year, and the more you understand and then visually observe the cows, the better and more valuable the information is to our farming operation" says Rhonda.

During the first year, Rhonda was delighted by the support she received when she was learning to understand the data. Now it is perceived as a "tool in the toolbox" along with a written training protocol, created to instruct staff what to do when the daily health report and heat report are released. It is creating better, proactive farmers for their operation. Last year, they had their twelve late calving cows in the front paddock close to the shed, so they knew when each was calving. This was hugely beneficial, "as normally the last few late cows are the ones, we would have problems with".

Given how beneficial having the collars on the calving cows were last year they have invested in a solar panel to run the reader down at their calving pad. This will mean the team will easily be able to dive deeper into the data to check which cows have calved during the night. "Mothering up cows to calves is that much easier and accurate", explains Rhonda. Rhonda believes her jersey cows calve rather cleanly so it can be difficult

to know what cow has calved. So, she is excited to be able to access real time data on all her calving cows this season.

The heat detection time saving and taking the pressure and reliance off Rhonda has been the main return on investment for Rhonda and Steven. However, accompanying this, is the real time health reports which informs the team when a cow is in distress, around 30hrs earlier than when she would show visual signs of distress, has been of equal value. Meaning less downtime recovering and more happy healthy cows producing more milk for a longer period. "We can now confidently transition cows from colostrum mob to milking mob and back again, not just after they have calved but during the season too. A herd management tool, which we previously didn't have in the tool box says Rhonda.

With this years' mating quickly approaching, Rhonda looks forward to a new staff member joining the team, so she can study the data more closely. This means less time spent drafting cows out, and more time working on improving her herds genetics, something she really enjoys.

The Bamford's are recognizing they require less straws for artificial insemination and the calving spread has tightened by half a week. Their main goal in the foreseeable future is to reduce their empty rate to 5%. Rhonda says "Collaring plays a huge role in this, and it would be challenging to achieve this solely by eye, once again using the collars as a tool to support our other processes will be critical to attaining this goal".



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