

Dairy Herd Management Programs Leverage RFID

(right) Ezequiel Correia uses the Allflex RS320 Series Stick Reader at the Correia Family Dairy

Herd checks for small herds, while time consuming, can still be done with relative ease. For herds with several hundred or a thousand cows, accurately identifying which cow should be checked for pregnancy or needs a shot can be an all-day job. Integrating RFID technology with herd management programs is a relatively new tool in the dairy industry. Not only is it more accurate, but takes less time to gather information. Producers understand that the faster cows can go and lay down, the happier they are and the more milk they produce.

Herd management evolves

In 1954, Dr. Bliss Crandall began DHI Computing Service from the basement of his home. He pioneered the country's first computerized system to electronically process dairy herd improvement records. For years, Dairy Herd Improvement Associations (DHIA) would conduct monthly herd tests, mail records to records processing centers that would merge it with the herd information, and then mail reports back to the dairy. Now records could be shared electronically to save time.

Today, DHI-Provo is one of the largest dairy records processing centers (DRPC) in the world and has developed DHI-Plus that allows producers to run individual cow reports, herd reports and compare their herd with other herds in the county, state and region.

Pocket DHI-Plus integrates RFID technology using Allflex EID tags with a handheld computer to automate herd checks. During vet checks or inventory, the information for individual cows is captured and then integrated with the producers' DHI-Plus herd management system back in the office.

According to Lad Muirbrook, DHI-Provo Account Executive, as dairy producers' needs have changed, DHI-Provo has created user-friendly herd management tools.

"RFID identification systems matched with herd management programs is one of the best tools to come along in several years," says Muirbrook. "The challenge is to find ways to maximize the technology to drive costs down and maximize the producer's investment."

"Cow smarts" make software easy

California-based veterinarians Connor Jameson and



Steve Eicker realized that routine tasks like vet checks were becoming more difficult to manage with paper and pencil. Dairies needed new tools so these vets founded Valley Agricultural Software (VAS) in Tulare, California and developed a herd management system called DairyCOMP 305 that was launched in 1983.

VAS's most recent introduction is the Pocket Cow Card system. The system includes a handheld computer with software to use with an Allflex HDX EID tag and handheld reader for herd checks and taking cow inventory and fully integrates with DairyCOMP 305.

According to William Avila, VAS Dairy Management Department Manager, the reason that VAS has been successful is because they begin with understanding the dairy's needs and then adapt the technology to fit.

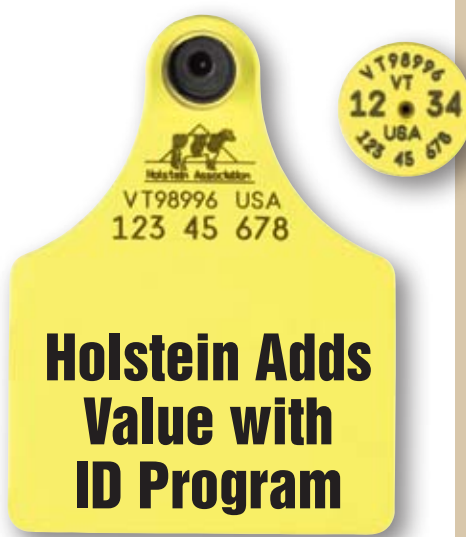
"We tell our clients, if you have 'cow sense,' can read and can push a button with your finger, that's all you need to use this system effectively," said Avila. "For larger dairies that need more sophisticated management systems, these tools pay for themselves in time savings and fewer errors."

Allflex user Ezequiel Correia is a second generation dairyman in Gustine, California. When he returned home after college to join the family operation, his dad asked him to take over the records management process. Although Correia Family Dairy had been using Dairy Comp 305 for several years, keeping track of individual cow records was difficult. He proposed implementing VAS's Pocket Cow Card system, demonstrating a two-year payback, to his dad.

"It used to take five guys and a paper and pen to do herd checks. Cows would be standing for several hours. I saw this as a tool to save our time and get the cows out where they could lay down in a fraction of the time," said Correia. "My dad is always willing to try new things ... he said, 'let's do it.' It's more than paid for itself."



Allflex recognizes these partners in adapting RFID technology with herd management solutions. Their systems feature Allflex HDX High Performance EID Tags and Allflex Series Stick Readers.



Holstein Adds Value with ID Program

Holstein USA has written the “bible” of tracking Holstein genetics. Their registry tracks back to the first 13 cows imported to this country in 1852.

Since the genetic pool came from a small set of original animals, understanding sire and dam lines has become increasingly important. That’s where the traditional function of a breed registry and RFID technology have intersected.

“Until the mid-90s, the only way to register your animal was identification with a photo or sketch,” said Rick Cronce, Holstein Executive Director of Business Development. “Now visual ID and RFID can be used. About half of our records come in with a permanent identification number.”

Allflex has been a partner since the program’s inception and is the proud supplier of visual and EID tags that can be purchased through Holstein USA. Learn more at www.holsteinusa.com.



Allflex USA Pioneers Double-Sided Marking

In the past when livestock producers requested custom tags with marking on the back side of a visual tag, Allflex filled the order with a manual process that required running a batch of tags twice through the marking machine. For an accurate order, each batch had to be matched up perfectly. Getting off by just one tag could mean the whole batch had to be scrapped. Since Allflex often produces large orders of tags requiring double-sided marking, precision and accuracy are critical.

Now Allflex USA has automated that process where double-sided printing can be done automatically reducing the production time and increasing the accuracy of the orders.

“Innovation and a “can-do” spirit is part of who Allflex USA is. It was something customers needed so we developed the tools to get it done,” said Stuart Hunt,

Allflex Vice President of Operations.

An R&D team led by Robert May, Laser Technical Manager, sketched out the equipment needed to automate the process. Featuring Allflex’s patented laser-ink marking process, the new machine features fully-customized, fully-synchronized laser and ink jet printers.

“Necessity is the mother of invention,” commented May, “and this new design ensures accuracy and efficiency.”

“The biggest challenge, ultimately, was software related. Our Information Technologies team became a critical part of the process and was successful in making sure that all variables were accounted for and in sync for each tag created,” said May.

This technology was pioneered in the USA. Allflex divisions in other countries will be looking at this capability for operations in other parts of the world.



Allflex Double Matched Pair Sets

Dairy producers like the flexibility of tailoring their tags to how they manage their herd. The Las Uvas Valley Dairy in Hatch, New Mexico has been using Allflex Double Matched Pair sets which include two Maxi visual tags with Large Male tags featuring reverse side marking and an HDX High Performance EID tag. Partnering the visual tag with an EID number is a big help during herd checks.

According to herdsman Rene Silva, speed and accuracy of data

A combined visual and electronic solution visible from nearly any angle

collection is the reason they moved to Double Matched Pair sets. The dairy milks 14,000 cows and have reduced the time it takes to do a complete inventory from almost three hours to just over one hour.

“With a large herd, our record keeping was getting out of hand. Now, as we do inventory or other checks, we can gather information as fast as we walk,” Silva said. “We get information fast that’s more accurate and fewer mistakes and we’re covered if a cow loses a tag.”

Contact your distribution partner or Allflex representative for information about Double Matched Pair sets.

ID Facilitates Bovine TB Eradication in New Mexico

Once the most prevalent infectious disease of cattle and swine in the United States, bovine TB caused more losses among U.S. farm animals in the early part of the twentieth century than all other infectious diseases combined. Since state and federal eradication programs began in 1917, bovine TB has nearly been eradicated from the nation's livestock population.

New Mexico recently found an infected dairy herd in the state and Governor Bill Richardson put a TB intervention team in place led by Dr. Dave Fly, New Mexico State Veterinarian. In addition to strict brand laws, the New Mexico Livestock Board is working with USDA, local veterinarians and producers as well as other states to develop an animal disease tracking system that will put an end to TB in New Mexico. According to Dr. Fly, having good identification and tracking tools are critical to finally eradicating this destructive disease.

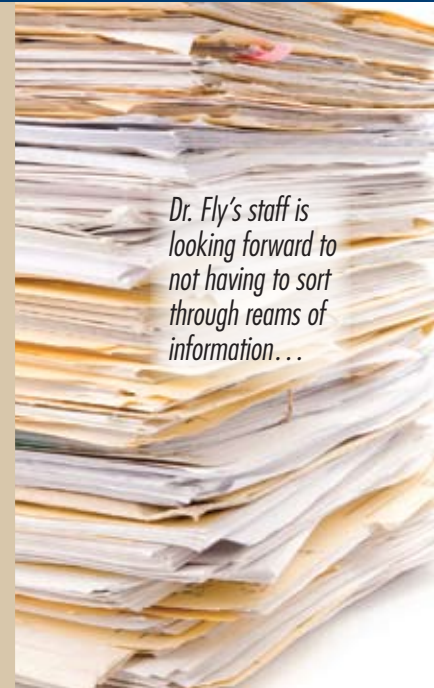
"Our producers traditionally recognize and support the concept of movement control, animal identification and the brand system. This system has been in place since the 1500s in the state of New Mexico," Fly said. "We plan to build on

this strong foundation and incorporate new technology to facilitate our efforts."

The state is using ISO-approved, official USDA 840 HDX and FDX tags from Allflex as a permanent external ID to supplement the state's brand laws and enable state vets to more quickly track infected animals. Dr. Fly's staff is looking forward to not having to sort through reams of information that today reside in boxes in a large conference room. An important next step is to inform veterinarians and livestock producers of the identification requirements and the available technology.

"We are beginning informational meetings to educate local vets as well as producers about the new tools being developed and the importance of identifying animals at the herd of origin with approved official identification – a brand and an official 840 EID tag," said Fly. "Our tests with the tag found very good retention, readability and it's a durable tag."

While a strong supporter of the brand system, Dr. Fly concedes that automating the process using electronic ID will simplify the process for tracking disease. As more livestock comes to the High Plains, it's even more important.



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Distributors Add Value

With a working knowledge of thousands of animal health and sanitation products, a full line of vaccines, animal identification products and replacement parts in stock, distributors are a key resource when producers have questions.

According to Jon Becerril, Allflex National Sales Manager the service distributors provide is critical to Allflex's success.

"Our distribution partners understand their customers' needs and how their operations work. We can walk along side them to develop identification solutions that meets their customers' needs," said Becerril.

Veterinary Service, Inc. (VSI), of Modesto, CA takes the time to understand products so

they can take care of customers.

"We hold weekly meetings and work closely with manufacturers to learn about the products we carry," said Steven Gardner, VSI Beef and Dairy Sales Manager. "We were one of the first to start selling ID as a management tool. Allflex and our other manufacturers work with our sales force in servicing producers' needs."

As more dairy herds leverage electronic ID for reproduction programs, Dr. Chad Wright, DVM with Veterinarian's Outlet in Bakersfield California, a division of Walco International, distributors can take service to the next level.

"We are intimately involved with the producer in managing his operation and are there to help in his success. For us, Allflex's support has

been great in helping us help our customers," said Wright. "EID has enabled complex reproduction programs that have dramatically increased the herd's pregnancy rates."

Bringing producers an effective solution really takes a team approach according to Gary Crandall, Territory Manager for Walco in Clovis, New Mexico. He services dairies in New Mexico and the Texas Panhandle.

"The key to our business is personal relationships. Our customers know when we'll be there and they count on us," said Crandall. "With EID, they trust us to bring the whole solution. When we work with manufacturers as a team, everyone wins, most importantly – the producer."

Allflex Staff Spotlight - Dairy Specialists

Growing up in the beef industry, Sid Howard and Brian Rainey never imagined they'd be having so much fun working with dairy producers. And while they are responsible for helping all livestock producers, the herd management needs of the dairy industry allow electronic identification technology to shine.



Brian Rainey
Western Regional
Manager/EID
Product Marketing
Manager

From southeast Kansas to Montana and now covering California, Nevada and Arizona, Brian Rainey has

experience with implementing electronic ID systems in nearly every type of livestock operation. With a B.S. from Kansas State University, he worked as a field coordinator for the Montana Beef Network while completing a Master's degree in Animal Science at Montana State University.

Since joining Allflex in 2004, he's helped implement innovative ID programs for livestock producers. His clientele include the largest concentration of dairy producers and calf raisers in the world.

"With the Montana Beef Network, I was on the ground level with producers on a daily basis facilitating animal management and traceability using electronic ID," Brian says. "That experience has been great in helping calf yards and dairies implement systems that conform to the producers needs. As a herd management tool, EID is quickly becoming a "must have."

Brian works closely with all segments of the industry, especially traditional animal health distribution partners in helping them leverage the new tools. In his role as EID Product Marketing Manager, Brian also works with Allflex's other regional managers specifically on special projects related to EID.

"Sid and I work closely together with many dairy producers who find incredible value in using EID to manage their operations. This technology works really well and it's beautiful to see how much it helps save time and money," Brian adds.

In his spare time, Brian is an avid outdoorsman and loves to hunt and fish. He and his new bride, Katrina, enjoy traveling and recently returned from a European honeymoon.



Sid Howard
Southwest Plains
Regional Manager

Based in Canyon, TX, Sid Howard is at the epicenter of the dairy expansion in the High Plains and the traditional stronghold of the US cattle feeding industry.

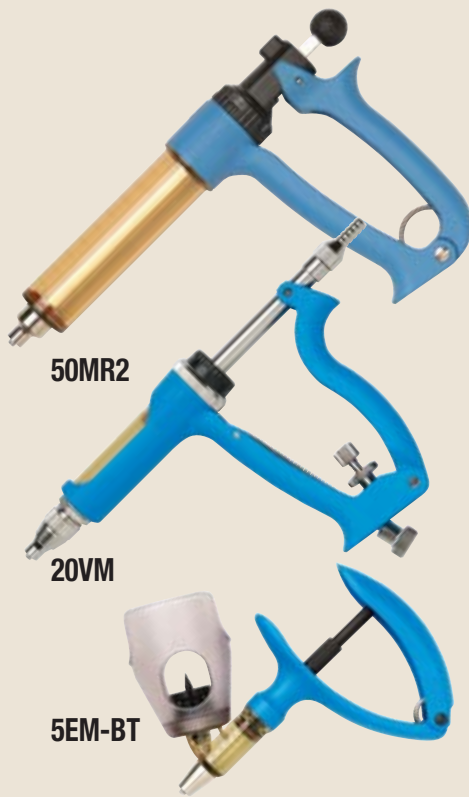
As Southwest Plains Regional Manager, he's responsible for handling the identification needs of large dairies and large cattle feeders.

"Animal ID, especially EID, has become one of the most important tools for the livestock industry simply because of the detailed information that can be collected quickly and accurately," says Sid. "It's a tool that can be used at all levels of this industry and from the beginning of the production cycle to the end."

According to Sid, his meeting with Allflex after graduation from New Mexico Junior College in Hobbs, New Mexico was the first and last time he's interviewed for a job. He started as the Feedyard Specialist and then after two years became regional manager. After nearly 15 years with the company, he is quick to share his admiration and fondness for the company and its people.

"Every day when I'm in the field, I am totally confident of the organization that's backing me. I know we can help our distributors and ultimately the producer meet or exceed his needs when it comes to implementing an ID solution," he says. "We have the people, the quality products and the service to back it up!"

When he's not meeting with customers in Texas, SW Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico, Sid and his wife, Rozanna are busy keeping up with 15 year-old Quay who is quickly becoming an accomplished roper.



Allflex Precision Syringes

Allflex offers an extensive line of syringes backed with full-service support. Our syringes are designed for use by veterinarians and livestock producers to administer most animal health medications. Contact your Allflex distributor or Allflex regional manager for more information.



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