

NEWS RELEASE

IN-LINE TEST TACKLES HIGH SOMATIC CELL COUNT PROBLEMS

A new in-line automated cell count detection system from Promar International delivers cost-effective and timely diagnosis of problem cows allowing faster cure rates, reduced milk losses and secured milk bonuses.

Cellsense is an automated test for somatic cell counts based on the California Mastitis Test. It can be quickly fitted to any configuration of milking parlour and allows speedy assessment of individual cow cell counts with no disruption to milking routines.

“High cell count cows are an endemic problem in dairy herds, harbouring infection, reducing yields and potentially leading to milk quality deductions,” comments Promar Senior Consultant Richard Hooson. “While tests carried out at milk recordings can spot offenders the data is too little, too late. Effective management requires more timely results and more regular testing.

“The Cellsense system allows cows to be tested regularly and research shows that weekly testing is a more effective regime to keep on top of cell counts.”

It is usually fitted to a number of units in the parlour and does not need to be installed on every milking point. “If the unit is fitted on every third cluster, every cow will be capable of being tested at least once a week.”

To test a cow, a 5ml sample of milk is diverted into the test unit and a 2ml sub-sample is mixed with reagent. The sample is then viscosity tested 10 times and an average calculated. The result is then displayed visually using a traffic light system with five different bands ranging from a green light for cell counts below 200,000 cells/ml, up to a red light where cell count exceeds 2 million cells.

“The test is quick and simple to operate and gives an instant, easily interpreted result. It is so quick that cows can be tested more than once per milking if a strange result is observed although accuracy is good at 92% compared to laboratory tests,” continues Mr Hooson. “The system is accurate to +/- 65,000 cells below 700,000, which is far more accurate than conductivity as a measure of cell count.

“Early identification of problem cows allows effective action whether it be treatment immediately, culling of persistent offenders or diversion of milk away from the bulk tank to preserve valuable cell count bonuses. In New Zealand, where the system originates, non antibiotic strategies such as mineral drenches or anti-inflammatories are considered to ensure the maximum volume of saleable milk.”

The Cellsense system can be easily installed between milkings and has no effect on vacuum levels within the milking plant as it doesn't interrupt the flow of the majority of milk through the line. The units are self cleaning after every test and the whole system is cleaned during the usual circulation cleaning routine.

Once installed the running costs work out at 1.3p per test, which is equivalent to 0.14p per litre sold once capital costs are included.

“Compared with the achievable benefits of realising lower somatic cell counts, the Cellsense system represents outstanding value for money,” Mr Hooson concludes.

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