

## INNOVATION

# A day of inspiration

New Zealand Dairy Tech Day gave **Sue Bradley** an opportunity to see the innovations emerging from a country that's farmed without agricultural subsidies for 40 years

Innovative ways to improve farm productivity and profitability using advances developed in the southern hemisphere provided plenty of food for thought at the New Zealand Dairy Tech Day.

The event at Sansaw Dairies Ltd near Shrewsbury, one of the UK's leading grass-based dairy farms, attracted around 200 farmers keen to learn about the latest handling systems, technology and data capture and advances in animal welfare and genetics developed by the island nation, one of the world's largest agricultural exporters.

## Profitable farming

New Zealand's dairy industry is considered an exemplar of profitable farming without the support of subsidies, which were withdrawn by its government 40 years ago. Since then it has developed practices geared towards efficient grass-fed milk production, including 'mob' grazing and selective genetics, in regenerative farming systems.

Opening the event, New Zealand Agricultural Counsellor Hilary Kernow spoke of how agritech was important for both countries. "This celebration is not for today, it's ongoing. We are two countries working together to meet the challenges," she said.

Resilient and productive cattle able to produce good volumes of quality milk from grass are the goal of New Zealand's genetics companies.

"One thing the country is good for is capacious cows that can fit a lot of food in and convert that into milk containing high value protein and fat; they're tough, being used to both hot days and cool days, and they're easy-care, low touch-cows, which is important for maintaining a better work-life balance," explained Jo Burton, Export Manager with CRV New Zealand, which works with Avoncroft in the UK.

"We provide grass-feed genetics for cows in organic biological grazing and semi-grazing; cows that suit these systems," she added.

## Farmers keen to hear about New Zealand Dairy Tech



**"We are two countries working together to meet the challenges"**  
Hilary Kernow  
New Zealand Agricultural Counsellor

CRV innovations include 'Ovalert', which conveys health and fertility signals to multiple devices, making herds more efficient and easier to manage.

Another company specialising in grass-based genetics is LIC, a name known in New Zealand from the 1900s and the UK since the 1980s. "Smaller stature cows are better to maintain grass quality through their ability to have a higher percentage of grass in their diet as their maintenance requirement is less than ones influenced by North American genetics," said the company's representative Sean Chubb.

"We offer three types of cow: traditional Holstein Friesian and Jersey and a Jersey x Holstein Friesian marketed as a 'KiwiCross' cow, which has hybrid vigour, this provides higher volume output with higher percentages of fat and protein, and increased fertility and longevity," he added.

Currently LIC is helping farmers move

towards autumn calving blocks to meet the demand from processors.

Successful 'mob' or 'rotational' grazing requires secure boundaries, something Gallagher has specialised in since it invented the first electric fencing systems in 1938. Its Intelligent Energisers run on solar power. The company also produces wireless load bars and handheld EID readers for monitoring condition, with information sent to mobile phones using Bluetooth and wi-fi.

Electric fencing, livestock identification and monitoring equipment are just some of the products offered by Datamars, a collection of historic New Zealand brands with global reputations such as Tru-Test, Speedrite and Hayes.

"New Zealand is fantastic for growing pasture; in the UK farmers can grow pasture as good as in New Zealand, it's just about managing it efficiently and effectively to maximise production," explained the company's representative John Frizzell.

Tow and Fert's range of liquid foliar spray machines offers versatility and

saves money on fertilisers; solid urea is dissolved in the tank and applied as a foliar spray onto grass. This means more nitrogen is absorbed and utilised, with less being lost to the environment.

"It's also possible that foliar application of the nitrogen/sulphur and carbon mix onto higher grass covers stimulates the plant to mineralise higher levels of nitrogen from the soil," said Tow and Fert representative Leslie Dwyer of FuturAg.

Hustler balefeeding machines distribute silage and other supplementary feed around fields, or indoor areas, rather than depositing it in ring feeders. This means all livestock have equal access to feed and there's reduced poaching and soil compaction in certain spots.

The technology Milk Bar™ Teats has a profound impact on calf health, being engineered to activate the correct sucking action to increase saliva production, which contains immunity-boosting enzymes. The design and specific rubber formulation protect calves from the harmful effects of fast feeding. Digestion and nutrient uptake are improved and incidents of diarrhoea and cross sucking are reduced.

"We never get tired of seeing the positive impact of our controlled flow system in calf barns around the world," said global sales manager Anna McIntyre.

Another animal health innovation is Mastatest, an easy-to-use on-farm diagnostic tool for identifying the bacterial cause of mastitis cases and antibiotic sensitivity. It gives faster results compared with sending samples to laboratories. Veterinary technology adviser Georgia Thresh from Agsenze said individual cases of the disease cost as much as £350 when the cost of antibiotics and drop in milk yield and quality were factored in. Speedy diagnosis means antibiotics are used selectively and produces useful data for herd management.



Julie Smith and Olivia Marino of Gallagher

## "It's great to show our agritech here and be welcomed by UK farming"

Paul Webster  
New Zealand Trade Commissioner

Intelligent dairy farm monitoring, whether milk, water or fuel, is the aim of Levno, which uses smart sensors, IoT (Internet of Things) technology and cutting edge software to provide essential insights crucial to productivity.

"Technology is a powerful tool; it's extra eyes and ears," explained field sales technician Adam Farmer. "Our multiple sensors send data to a transceiver and on to a cloud, with farmers alerted to any discrepancies in real time."

Sansaw Dairies' 70-point Waikato® Orbit Rotary Milking System, one of the largest in the UK, drew strong interest during the event. Waikato's UK representative Mohammad Khawaja explained the system had automatic cup removers, cow restraints, SmartPULS, SmartSPRAY and auto wash. While the

Sansaw platform has a concrete deck, customers can also opt for the Centrus Composite platform, which is 80% lighter and more resistant to chemicals, helping to reduce wear and tear. Looking ahead to 2026, the new ErgoPOD™ semi-robotic milking technology is set to increase productivity, reduce physical effort, improve safety and deliver real-time insights, which Mohammad said would "raise the bar in milking efficiency and operator experience."

## Cost-effective way forward

Other labour-savers from New Zealand include Teatwand automated teat-spraying systems, which also ensure efficient teat coverage to reduce the risk of mastitis. "Our systems are a simple, cost-effective way forward," explained Robert Barker from the supplier On Farm Solutions, which exports to 33 countries.

Sansaw Dairies operates across 820 hectares and uses a spring-calving, grass-based system. Its 1,500 cows, the breeding of which has been based on New Zealand Friesian, Irish Friesian and Jersey cattle, are milked twice a day, with 80% of their output produced from forage.

The dairy, which operates under Arla CARE standards, is overseen by award-winning farm manager Breiffni Daly who works with a 14-strong team. Breiffni, who has farmed in New Zealand, has earned national recognition for his work on budgeting, team cohesion and system refinements and was named the *Farmers' Weekly* Farm Manager of the Year in 2024.

Managing director James Thompson said a high demand for milk in the area led to the Sansaw Estate setting up a dairy unit in 2012.

New Zealand Trade Commissioner Paul Webster hailed the Dairy Tech Day a great success. "It's great to show our agritech here and be welcomed by UK farming," he said.



Sean Chubb of LIC chats to Ed Watkins and Jack Evans of Popu