




IAN POWELL 
INGLEWOOD, TARANAKI

PROJECT SPECS

Supa4 40-aside Herringbone | 350 Cows | Commissioned 2022

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS: CowTRAQ™ Collars, Sort Gate 2500
AUTHORISED WAIKATO MILKING SYSTEMS DEALER: Moa Milking and Pumping

Increased flexibility and labour efficiency with CowTRAQ™ Collars

Ian Powell and LeAnne Blakelock are lower order sharemilkers in a farm equity partnership with LeAnne’s parents, milking 350 cows on a 120-hectare dairy farm at Inglewood, Taranaki.

With labour being one of their largest costs, they started modelling a CowTRAQ™ Collars and Sort Gate 2500 system as a solution to increase their efficiencies and reduce labour costs.

With an existing Waikato Milking Systems 40 aside herringbone milking system having already been in place for five years when they bought the farm 10 years ago, “we added an end-to-end CowTRAQ™ Collars and Sort Gate 2500 System” in August 2022 says LeAnne.

As sharemilkers who were paying for it themselves, they chose CowTRAQ™ Collars because they “wanted a straightforward system with a one-off cost, and no ongoing monthly subscriptions.”

Due to the topography of the farm and connectivity issues, the couple couldn’t use WIFI or satellite feeders around the farm, so the CowTRAQ™ Collars and TraqHQ™ software provided the perfect solution. “We are in a cell, WIFI and data dead-zone,” says LeAnne, “so the system copes beautifully with that as the collars store around 10 days of data, so when the cows come to the shed we collect the data - and we bring the cows in every day anyway.”

With 24/7 heat and health monitoring for every cow,



CowTRAQ™ Collars have allowed LeAnne and Ian to make more informed data-driven decisions to lower the labour intensity required during their mating season, and reduce their staff from three to two. “Because we’ve previously needed three staff in the shed over mating season, we’ve tended to carry that extra labour over the rest of the year that wasn’t fully utilised, so we already had inefficiencies in our

labour systems," says LeAnne.

CowTRAQ™ Collars have "Taken the question mark out of mating. Previously my husband used to have to do it all himself, and he never felt comfortable relying on staff to do it. Tail paint can be so subjective, and it's just so much less labour intensive now," says LeAnne. "Now Ian can do more off-farm activities, and spend more time cycling and enjoying his hobbies."

Before using CowTRAQ™ Collars Ian had the perception that as soon as they put technology near animals, especially animals the size of cows, they would be having trouble with it. CowTRAQ™ proved him wrong. "We were checking them every single day through mating and every single collar was reading and it just worked!"

LeAnne and Ian put the collars on themselves and linked up the data on a spreadsheet,

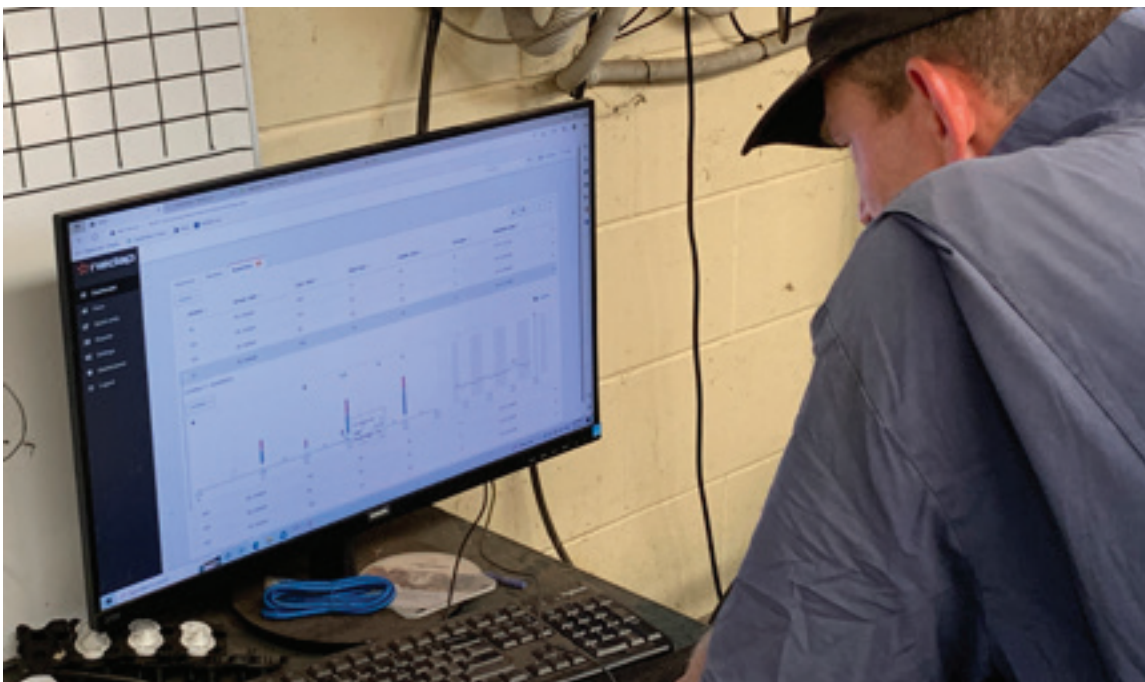
saying "It required no technical expertise and we did it slowly over a couple of weeks - it was a choice we made rather than doing it all at once. It was very straightforward."

One of the other appeals of the CowTRAQ™ Collars for LeAnne was that they don't require a counterweight. "They are really lightweight,

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weighing only a couple of hundred grams, and they sit gently on the cow's neck. They don't have to sit tight and touch the cow to record data - so there's no need to adjust the collar."

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Ian engages the technology as soon as the cows are back at the shed, usually towards the end of cupping the first row, just to see what's happening "If we've got lame cows to draft out, or if there's any sickness or any issues that we've got to deal with.

Discovering that he could use the collars to detect lameness a couple of days earlier than he had previously been able to has been hugely beneficial in terms of animal health.

LeAnne says "They have reinforced our decision-making. We are really happy with our submission rates since leaving the collars to make the decisions. Our results are up with our best over the years."

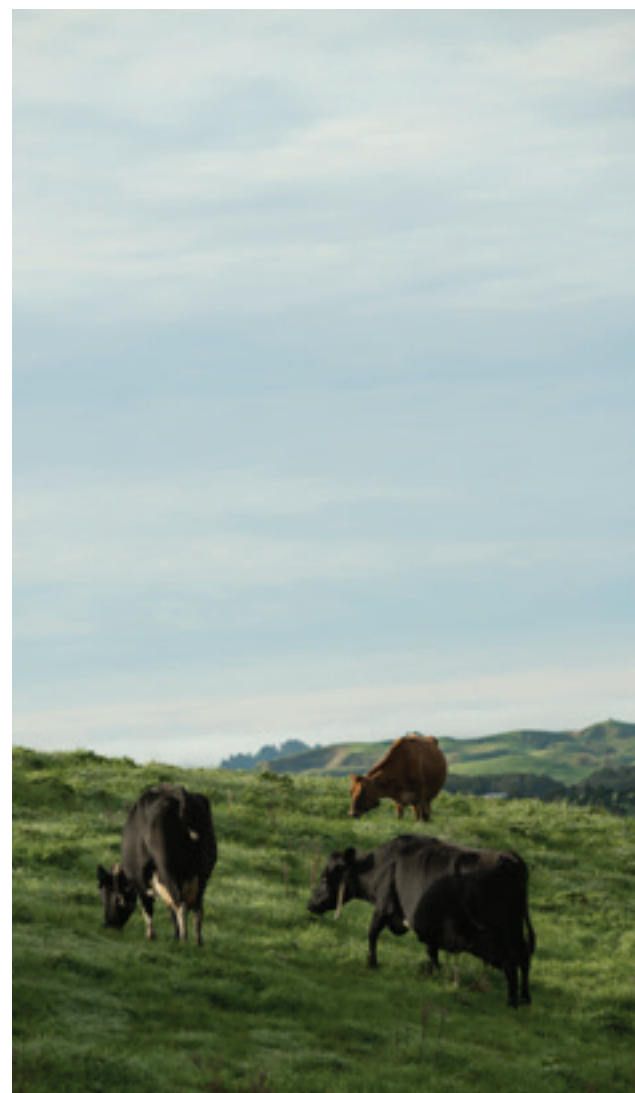
One of the other bonuses for LeAnne and Ian's farm is they can now tell if a cow is missing. "It sounds silly, but with our rolling to steep land with lots of trees and bushes, cows can go missing. Now if we know a cow is missing at milking time we can go to

the paddock and look for her right away - whereas previously we wouldn't have known."

Ian not only sees the benefits for himself as an experienced dairy farmer but believes this technology will help the next generation most due to its relevance to what they're learning, and how they're learning.

"I think the biggest benefit of CowTRAQ™ for my staff, is that it gives them confidence in their decision making, because previously they might have hesitated to question whether this cow is sick, now they just refer to the software which helps them to make the right decision. I can trust my team to rely on the software now."

Having previously felt tied to the farm from mid-July right through to the first week of December, a huge change for Ian has been in the flexibility he has gained.





"The biggest benefit for me personally, is the flexibility the technology brings. It gives me the confidence that I can get the same level of herd management we would get from a manager of 20 years' experience, even when I'm not here."

"Both of my staff have less than four years' experience and already, I've got the confidence to go away and know that, because they know how the technology works, they can do exactly what I would do if I was here."

Not having to be on farm for every key moment of the year gives Ian and LeAnne the work-life balance they have been trying achieve. "CowTRAQ™ gives me the confidence to leave my team to continue to function without me."

"Because of CowTRAQ™, I was able to commit to attending my wife's graduation in Wellington, an event I would normally have struggled to attend and more than likely stressed about what was happening

on farm the whole time."

Ian and LeAnne also see other benefits with this technology "In the current environment that we've got, where some mental health issues for farmers are becoming more and more, having that flexibility to just go 'right-o, we're going away for the weekend' and being able to get that balance is really important to us."

