



## Introducing the next generation of dairy farmers to the future of milking

The next generation of dairy farmers are being introduced to the latest best practice at Hartpury College, Gloucester, where the AirWash Plus automatic dip and rinse system has just been fitted to the existing 2003 DeLaval milking parlour.

Hartpury's dairy unit is run as part of a commercial farming operation by Velcourt, giving the 350 or so students in land-based BTEC and Degree courses direct experience of the real world of farming where good management is vital.

"Our farm at Hartpury has to wash its face financially, and we are focused on making a profit from milk," says farm manager Peter Lord. "With just under 300 cows to milk, we have a full-time dairy staff to ensure the underlying operation runs as smoothly as possible. However, the students are very 'hands-on' too, and as they are learning it inevitably means that there can be times when things are not done the most efficient way, or more chemicals than strictly necessary are used.

"Our old teat spray system was undoubtedly a chore and over the last few years we had been fighting against a gradual but consistent increase in mastitis. I knew it was time to install an automatic dip and rinse system, both to enhance efficiency and hygiene, as well as to introduce this technology to the students."

The cost of a new dip and rinse system is something that had to be justified and approved by both Velcourt and Hartpury College, so Peter Lord conducted a detailed appraisal and then constructed a business



Milk lines and AirWash Plus equipment located in a cellar beneath Hartpury's milking parlour.

case. At the heart of this was the reduction in the labour burden and milking times that would result from the new system, meaning that the cost of a full-time member of staff could be saved.

There was also the question of which system to go for. "This was a significant investment for us so I looked at all the systems on the market," said Peter. "AirWash Plus stood out as offering a number of advantages just not available elsewhere – especially the fact that it could be fitted to the existing clusters and there is no restriction on the liners we could use. The teat spray application is much better than other systems, promising a considerable reduction in the amount of chemicals used too.

"The more I examined the options, the more I truly believed that AirWash Plus was the right system for what we are doing."

Peter then presented his proposal to Velcourt director Robbie Taylor who described it as a "no-brainer", while the Principal of Hartpury College commended it for its labour-saving and efficiency elements.

The final decision to install AirWash Plus



The control equipment is neatly housed in cabinets adjacent to the drum of dip.

was taken in September and it went 'live' just a month later, on 10 October. "The fact that AirWash Plus would be installed and maintained by T H White was also a big factor in our thinking," Peter added. "Over the years we have had superb back-up from T H White's Huntley branch – it all added up to a reliable, value-for-money package."

After just over a week in use (at the time of writing), AirWash Plus has already resulted in a reduction in Hartpury's milking times of almost an hour a day and much less dip has been used. As things go forward, further improvements are expected and they are looking forward to seeing the impact it will have on mastitis cases.

Summing it up, Peter said: "In my view AirWash Plus is the best automatic dip and rinse system available and I'm delighted that Hartpury students can gain first-hand experience of it. It's one of the best investments for the future we've ever made."



Hartpury College farm manager Peter Lord (left) with T H White dairy manager Adrian Moore.

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