

Milk recording – where we came from and where we are headed.

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Summary

This paper and its subject have been forwarded to highlight more than 120 years of development in milk recording. The core processes of milk recording are still the same, but tools and technology we use today has evolved dramatically. It can be said that not much has changed since milk recording and data collection started in the late 1800s and early 1900s - the focus on collection of accurate information is still the same. On some points, we are even returning to where we were during the first half of 20th century – on-farm data analysis for educated management decisions.

To protect our farmers and their interest, it is important to constantly keep focus on the task we are here to solve. We must acknowledge that tools and technology are just the means to reach the goal of improving and supporting profitability in dairy production. It cannot be said often enough that animal identification is still the basic key to handling data - both on the farm and in our databases. Animals have specific and individual personalities. Earlier they were observed by the human eye and skill; today differences between animal is described via advanced algorithms handling numerous amounts of data collected by sensors, markers and indicators to monitor milk production, activity, and health.

Data used to be stored on paper in books. Many talks about cows on farms up to mid-1950s, was still based on turning pages in books combining or comparing notes from monthly milk recordings. As technology developed, milk recording organizations adapted – at first there was remote computers, then on-farm personal computers, and milk recording probably was the first ones to use data storage on the cloud. Increases in herd size; development of new ways to feed and house cows; breeding towards highly selected animals for milk production – each have a parallel to technologic development. The presentation in Auckland will cover a series of examples where old principles meet new technologies, and highlight our joint challenges combing these for the benefit of the farmer. Though the amount and source of our data has changed, the principles and processes of milk recording remain as they did in the beginning. The challenge that faces milk recording organizations is embracing technology advancements and remaining relevant to dairy producer needs while staying committed to their core mission.

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