Milk Recording is seen as critical to third parties in the UK, as a revenue stream.

Or

Third parties are now interested in Milk Recording.

Justin Frankfort, Marketing Manager, National Milk Records (NMR), UK.

Background.

In the UK, Milk Recording is neither compulsory, nor state run; we operate in a competitive environment with two other MRO's. There are approx 12,000 dairy herds in the UK.

NMR records approx 5,000 dairy herds, testing around 24,000 milk samples a day, six days a week. Additional tests using the same milk sample can be carried out for Johne's, BVD, Leto and IBR.

NMR has 35 field staff and 300 milk recorders, along with laboratory staff and back office staff.

We are in the process of reorganising our laboratory function down from three sites to two for great efficiency and ultimately, cost reduction.

Relationships with Third Parties.

By third parties, we would define these as organisations that we associate with , and that there is commonality of purpose – a profitable dairy farmer – without whom, we would not have a business and neither would they.

The main third parties we work with are:

Vets
Feed Companies
Management Consultants
AI Companies
Breed Societies
IT Companies

Vets. The vet market for years has viewed the work of MRO's as useful, but not very exciting. This changed as specific software was developed (Interherd), and then disease testing via the preserved milk sample was introduced. We have put dedicated resource into building better relationships with Vets over the last four years, to understand better what they require from us. We regard the vet relationship with the farmer as the biggest single influencer apart from the Bank Manager.

Feed Companies. The Feed market in the UK is dominated by a few large national companies, some well respected Regional business's and then independent consultants who provide a much more hands on personal service to farmers – the objective being to improve feed efficiency based on the forages available. We have over the years developed web based services looking at 3.2 protein intercepts and fat and protein ratios. For a feed consultant to use these to help the decision making

process, can be time consuming. NMR has developed good links with feed companies, training their staff to help them make better use of the software now available.

Management Consultants. Milk recording plays only a small part of management consultants business; there has been a realisation however recently that accurate cow records are critical in helping to plan future strategies. NMR has taken active steps to engage with these organisations, using Interherd+ as the way in. This has lead to NMR being able to sell additional services to them; software, training and disease testing.

AI Companies. Milk Recording data has long been used to help identify future sires and dams of sires. Today, it is also used to help plan sire selection on a farm by farm and cow by cow basis. The advent of new software has made this process faster and cheaper, enabling more farms to engage with this process. The majority of UK AI companies use Interherd+ as the software of choice to analyse the Milk Recording data.

IT Companies. NMR works with many different software developers, national animal databases and parlour software providers. Our role has always been to collect the base records and pass this on to others for further analysis. One of our main partners has been Pan Livestock.

Pan Livestock.

Originally comprised of academics at Reading University, we have worked with them for 15 years. The original product was Interherd, used by vets to analyse data, but moving on to farmer facing products and also linking to milking parlour software.

NMR is the exclusive UK distributor of PAN software products. We also provide on farm trainers, back office support staff, development time and marketing input, as we see these products as a way of generating additional income for ourselves, through more farmers recording and also retaining existing customers. One in four NMR customers is using a PAN product and every farm has access to their web reports via a PAN database that takes data from NMR and pushes it out through a web interface – Herd Companion.

Interherd.

The main product that vets and farmers have used over the years is Interherd; it has very good analytical properties and is able to run as a standalone product, allowing vets to run some farm datasets as a bureau service. The program is however built on old technology, cumbersome to run , hard to find useful items and poor at generating reports.

Interherd has been able to take data from milking parlours – yields and events, and pass this back into the Interherd database, creating very powerful records on which to base management decisions.

Interherd+

It was clear a replacement for Interherd was required. The market was facing new competitive products from other providers, so a replacement was built – Interherd+.

Using the latest software available from Microsoft – SQL server and .Net, has allowed the developers to speed up the analytical process, but more importantly produce graphs and data grids that allow interpretation of the reports to be made much faster and more easily understood by the dairy farmer.

One of the downsides of the old system was that data had to imported manually, this has been replaced by an automatic system that grabs any new data that is available every time Interherd+ is switched on, freeing up time and making the product much more user friendly. Disease testing data – Johne's, BVD, Lepto and IBR , is imported at the same time, giving a clear view of the whole herd performance.

Data can be imported from other MRO's but this is a manual process.

Benchmarking.

Experience has shown that farmers like to know where they stand against their peers, benchmarking has been part of the NMR service for many years, but this has now been expanded to cover a much larger group of herds. 500 NMR herds were selected at random and key performance figures were produced – see table below. These targets (the top 25% in each group) were added to Interherd+ to create the opening 'conversation'. From this, other conversions follow naturally. Bench mark groups have been created for the 'minor breeds' and new bench mark groups can be easily created if required.

Interestingly, there has been no questioning by the industry – which is now being published each year in the UK; there is a general recognition that with such a large dataset, the figures are accurate – maybe a question for ICAR to look at in other countries?

Link to whole kpi report:.

http://www.panlivestock.com/PDF%20Files/HolsteinFriesian500HerdsSept2011.pdf

Summary of Key Performance Indicators derived from analysis of 500 NMR milk recording herds for the year ending 30th September 2011

Parameter	**Median (1)**	**1st – 3rd quartile (25% - 75%) (2)**	**Target (3)**	**Inter-quartile range (4)**
A. Culling rate	26%	21% - 32%	**21%**	11%
B. Culling / death rate in first 100 days of lactation	5%	3% - 8%	**3%**	5%
C. Age at exit (years)	6.6	5.9 - 7.5	**7.5**	1.6
D. Age at exit by lactations	3.9	3.3 - 4.5	**4.5**	1.2
E. Percentage Served by day 80	47%	33% - 59%	**59%**	26%

F. Percentage conceived 100 days after calving	25%	16% - 33%	**33%**	17%
G. Calving to 1st service interval (days)	98	82 - 119	**82**	37
H. Calving interval (days)	421	408 - 436	**408**	28
I. Age at 1st calving (years)	2.4	2.2 - 2.7	**2.2**	0.5
J. Conception rate	31%	24% - 37%	**37%**	13%
K. Percentage service intervals at 18-24 days	30%	23% - 38%	**38%**	15%
L. Percentage service intervals >50 days	29%	20% - 40%	**20%**	20%
M. Percentage eligible for service that served	29%	20% - 40%	**40%**	20%
N. Percentage eligible for service that conceived	9%	5% - 13%	**13%**	8%
O. Lifetime milk / cow / day (kg)	12	10 - 13	**13**	3
P. Milk / cow / year (kg)	8,200	7,170 - 8,953	**8,953**	1,783
Q. Average protein%	3.27%	3.20 - 3.33%	**3.33%**	0.13%
R. Average fat%	3.98%	3.84% - 4.12%	**4.12%**	0.28%
S. 305 day yield (kg)	7,768	6,960 - 8,515	**8,515**	1,555
T. Average SCC ('000 cells/ml)	203	158 - 249	**158**	91
U. Percentage SCC >=200,000 cells/ml	23%	18% - 29%	**18%**	11%
V. Percentage SCC >500,000 cells/ml	9%	6% - 12%	**6%**	6%
W. Percentage 1st recording SCC >=200,000 cells/ml	19%	15% - 24%	**15%**	9%
X. Percentage chronic SCC >=200,000 cells/ml	13%	9% - 17%	**9%**	8%
Y. Percentage Dry period cure (High:Low)	73%	66% - 80%	**80%**	14%
Z. Percentage Dry period protection (Low:Low)	84%	80% - 90%	**90%**	10%
ZA. Percentage Low at end of previous lactation (SCC<200,000 cells/ml)	63%	52% - 72%	**72%**	20%

Report writing.

Too much time (so rarely done), was spent trying to generate reports that could be taken on farm and used by the vet or consultant. This has been resolved in Interherd+, where document templates are built, recorded and then reused on other farms, allowing some level on consistency to be built upon. Back office admin staff are able to be trained to use the software, allowing the farm facing staff time to analyse the reports and provide interpretation, something NMR and Pan Livestock do not do.

Company logos can be inserted automatically enabling some degree of 'Branding' to take place, and standard generic text can be added – to explain what the grid means, but not to interpret the data – that requires a consultant and a pen to write on the report.

The Bottom Line.

The launch of Interherd+ into the dairy market in the UK has been a game changer; Milk Recording is no longer seen as boring, but useful; it seen as a critical part of the dairy industry, as everyone can see that there is money to be made by everyone involved in the management of the dairy herd, through greater efficiency and having a better understanding of the performance of the herd.

Vets use it to increase the number of farms that have routine visits, and are able to influence better fertility performance; feed companies are able to ration the herds better and so get more return from the feed purchased; AI companies are using Interherd+ to plan matings based on herd performance.

Most importantly, the farmer can see that the quality of conversations he is having with all the above, has dramatically improved the way he/she manages the herd; the farmer can see he is making more money, without incurring any additional cost.

40% of NMR herds now have their data reviewed by third parties. These third parties promote milk recording to non users and other services – disease testing for example.

There is a now general understanding that money can be made by third parties, by using Milk Recording data through Interherd+. Everyone wins.