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**What’s time worth on your dairy farm?**

*Automated herd monitoring systems can help make more effective use of your human resources.*

*GROENLO, Netherlands.* [Sept. 28, 2022]– Good employees are essential to quality animal care and dairy farm success. But rising labor costs, combined with finding and retaining farm personnel, have become serious pain points for dairies of all sizes and locations.

According to USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service Farm Labor Survey:

* Real (inflation-adjusted) average wages for crop and livestock workers (excluding contract labor) rose 1.1% per year between 1990 and 2020.
* In the past five years, real farm wages grew at 2.9% annually, consistent with reports that workers were harder than usual to find.[[1]](#footnote-1)

However, due to even greater worker scarcity and inflation, farm wages jumped 8% from 2021 to 2022.[[2]](#footnote-2) To put this in perspective, labor as a cost of production is usually the second greatest cost on the farm after feed.[[3]](#footnote-3)

This means dairy farms are increasingly focused on labor efficiency, looking for opportunities to streamline tasks and reduce herd management costs without sacrificing animal care and comfort. Automated herd monitoring tools are one solution to help you focus time more efficiently on vital tasks.

**Save time**

A host of variables impact how much time you or your employees spend on animal health checks every day, but automated herd monitoring tools have cut task time requirements by as much as half for some dairies.

“Not only do these systems increase herd productivity by providing actionable data 24/7, they also serve to increase the efficiency of virtually every member of your farm’s team – from milkers to veterinarians and nutritionists,” says Tara Bohnert, business development manager at Nedap Livestock Management.

“We have the tools available to enable farms to do things better and know more. Teams and advisors can manage cows by exception instead of interacting with every animal when they only need to work with a handful,” she adds.

This ability allows you to hone in on standard operating procedures and increase team effectiveness. For example, from cow reports, nutritionists can see how cows react to changes in feed ingredients, effects of overcrowding or whether feed is pushed up on time.

“No one has to stand in the feed alley half the day or view hours of video to observe cows and employee routines to know if tasks are done properly or on time,” says Bohnert. “You have proof in the data, which takes minutes to review. The cows tell you what’s going on, and your team can focus on wisely using its time to address any needed changes.”

**Cut costs**

What does saving time mean from a financial perspective?

* Cutting just 20 minutes a day in time spent conducting daily animal checks saves 122 hours of labor in one year.
* At a wage of $15.822 per hour, this would total about $1,930 in direct savings per year.

For example, automated monitoring systems generate lists of animals needing health checks, and cow locating enables you to find those cows’ exact locations quickly and easily. As a result, employees can cut hours from mundane tasks and focus on higher-priority activities.

Leveraging sort gates also helps save on cattle handling, while maintaining proper lying time in a cow’s schedule – even on days she needs breeding or treatment. Sort gates can also reduce mundane time spent by employees walking pens or doing unnecessarily redundant tasks.

And automated herd monitoring technology featuring cow locating makes it possible to boost efficiency with pregnancy checks and ultrasounds with little interaction as possible. The cow locating feature can result in breeding cost savings as well.

“These are just a few examples of how automated cow monitoring and management systems can help your team work more efficiently and effectively to help your dairy best use your human resources,” concludes Bohnert. “This strategy benefits your cows and your people while driving profitability.”

Visit [nedap-livestockmanagement.com](https://www.nedap-livestockmanagement.com/dairy-farming/solutions/nedap-cowcontrol/) to learn more about how actionable data can improve time management on your dairy.

Nedap Livestock Management is the global leader in farming automation using individual animal identification. For more than 40 years, Nedap strengthens dairy farmers through the most reliable and innovative cow identification, monitoring and automation solutions. They empower managers and personnel with dependable information to make operational and strategic decisions and help dairies become more efficient, productive and successful.

For Nedap, trust and reliability in both partnership and technology are key. Leading international dairy farming companies, including genetics and milking equipment suppliers, partner with Nedap to include its technology in their systems. A publicly listed company, Nedap employs more than 800 people globally, across 10 locations and seven business units.

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**NV\_CowControl.jpg:** *Automated herd monitoring technology can help counter rising labor costs and minimize unpaid labor by reducing the amount of time daily animal checks require.*

1. 2022 USDA-Economic Research Service. Available at: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2022 NASS Farm Labor Survey. Available at: <https://downloads.usda.library.cornell.edu/usda-esmis/files/x920fw89s/mp48tj815/0c484p887/fmla0522.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Durst, P. 2020. Michigan State University Extension. Dairy farm labor efficiency. Available at: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/dairy-farm-labor-efficiency>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)