



# Once-daily milking has potential to revolutionise dairyfarming

One cannot imagine a change that would have a more significant effect on dairyfarmers and their farm business than whole-season once-daily milking (OAD).

by *Mark Blackwell,*  
information manager,  
*Livestock Improvement*  
*Advisory*

A full systems trial on OAD was the main recommendation that emerged from a forum organised by *Livestock Improvement Advisory* last December. The meeting brought together a group of farmers, scientists from *Dairying Research Corporation, AgResearch* and *Massey University*, plus advisers and LIC directors.

A systems trial run all-year-round would aim to maximise the advantages, and minimise the disadvantages of once-daily milking. Such a proposal will be considered this autumn.

## Reluctance

Though the major OAD issues involved have been identified in short-term trials, dairyfarmers are reluctant to adopt the practice for more than part of late lactation because of the risk of significant milk production and income loss.

The high genetic merit cows of today, together with well managed somatic cell counts, may mean that dairyfarmers can use once-a-day milking a lot more than is the case today.

Offsetting that, other milk quality issues are a concern.

There is a need to re-examine genetic matters, and the issue of

cow variability in terms of OAD effects on milk production.

Farmers need to think about the value they would attach to the ability to milk once-daily versus the value of an extra kilogram of milk-solids. How would you value these two alternatives?

OAD will not have application in all situations. The benefits are specific to each farm – such as labour saving and better use of capital assets.

Computer modelling suggests milk losses per cow per day could be offset by either increasing stocking rate, and/or extending lactation length.

OAD can be considered for part or all of lactation, or with part or all of the herd. It could be used for one full season, and the next season the herd could be twice-daily milking, depending on the circumstances.

Another recommendation was to establish a working group to raise funds to underwrite on-farm demonstrations similar to *More Summer Milk*, with the addition of farmer focus groups.

The few farms in New Zealand on OAD need to be looked at again to investigate genetic issues and economics. D