

LIVESTOCK



FORWARD THINKING: Tristan Mulhern recently invested in a cutting edge self-propelled feed mixer as a long-term cost-saving measure for the Hilltop View dairy at Inman Valley.

Data transfer leads list of mixer abilities

THE Sitrex Virage 200 self-propelled feed mixer, bought by SA's Hilltop View dairy, is the first machine of its kind in Australia.

Burder Industries product manager John Moore, who was involved in recent trials of the machine, said time management and productivity were among the major benefits the machine could provide and it could become a staple for livestock owners who use feed mixes.

"Once the word gets out that we've got one running here in Australia we'll see more interest shown by feed-lotters and farmers who want to make the most of their day," he said.

"It's a versatile machine in the fact it replaces tractors and manpower. It's a fully self-contained unit where you have one operator."

Mr Moore was impressed by the quality of the feed mix

in trials, saying it was "comparable to, or better than, most mixers available on the world market".

Mr Moore said a hydraulic transmission for easy operation and reduced fuel consumption were other benefits of the machine, but the real beauty was in the data transfer system.

"This is the first machine in Australia, and one of the first in the world, that's got access to telematics," he said.

Telematics allow the Italian manufacturers to monitor the machine and its operation, allowing them to provide recommendations and assistance if problems arise.

"It's a confidence boost for the owner - knowing he's got back up from Burder Industries here in Australia, from Sitrex in Italy and the dealer GJ East (Strathalbyn)," Mr Moore said.

— QUINTON MCCALLUM

Innovation helps consistency

BY QUINTON MCCALLUM

THE recent purchase of a self-propelled feed mixer has continued a history of innovation and smart management at Hilltop View dairy, Inman Valley.

Three years after investing in a concrete feedpad - reducing feed wastage by 20 per cent to 30pc - dairy-farmer Tristan Mulhern recently bought a Sitrex Virage 200 from Italy to replace the property's Jaylor mixing wagon.

Mr Mulhern said the feeding time of their 500 Holsteins had been cut in half and they had used less diesel because the Sitrex mixer didn't require two tractors during the feeding process, unlike the Jaylor.

"The main reason we looked at a self-propelled mixing wagon was to achieve consistency with different people doing mixes," he said.

The inconsistency in feed mixes resulted in inconsistency in the amount of daily milk solids yielded from

his cows.

The dairy, which calves year-round and employs four full-time workers, milks twice a day and yields 2.1 kilograms of milk solids a day.

This figure rose from 1.6kgMS/day a decade ago and Mr Mulhern said their ultimate aim was to "be above 700kg in milk solids for 12 months on our cows".

The cows are fed potatoes, pea silage, brewers grain, square bale silage and grain in the mix, which they are on

for eight months a year.

Feed volumes are typed into the mixer's computer before the product is picked up and fed into the hopper, which weighs the product and gives the operator a warning as the desired percentage of each feed nears.

Mr Mulhern said they had achieved an extra 0.5pc of protein percentage since the mixer purchase due to a steady starch level being given to the cows. Previously, some potatoes would make it through the mixing process

whole and cows would sift through them.

"Their intake has gone up as well because we're fitting another 0.5kg of food in because we're getting the right cut," Mr Mulhern said.

With the dairy industry in a volatile state and many dairy farms struggling to break even, Mr Mulhern said they were constantly looking to improve and cut costs.

"We also lease land and try to conserve fodder off it to keep costs down," he said.

"You can't change your

milk price. It is what it is but you can always look at what your variable costs are.

"Things are tight and you have to look at ways to make your business work. You have to keep things in your control."

While Hilltop View dairy is surviving by implementing innovative cost-saving measures and looking ahead - they are open to rotary robotics - Mr Mulhern said the local industry needed to change and move away from the two major supermarkets.

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