

SOUTHERN FIELD DAYS WRAP-UP

Lameness and shelters — fact or fiction?

INQUIRY levels for HerdHomes® shelters were strong at the recent Southern Field Days at Waimumu. Farmers were actively exploring options that allowed them to meet or exceed proposed environmental limits but at the same time maintained or, ideally, improved productivity and profitability.

Throughout New Zealand, HerdHomes® shelter owners have proven this to be feasible — farming profitably within proposed environmental limits.

Benefits can be gained at any time of the year by focusing on minimising soil and pasture damage while maintaining the cow in her peak performance range.

But what was surprising this year was the number of “experts” who had opinions on the management of animal shelter options.

While this indicates that the industry as a whole is putting more focus on shelter or standoff options, it is a concern when the information being used to advise is out of date or irrelevant for New Zealand conditions.

Take, for example, lameness.

European research indicates a higher incidence of lameness in cows that are housed versus those on pasture.

Can it therefore be assumed that



Warmer and drier . . . Housing cows in HerdHomes® means there is minimal soil and pasture damage and the cow is maintained in her peak performance range.

PHOTO: HERDHOMES®

this applies directly to New Zealand?

In some cases, most probably,

when the conditions are the same; eg European-style barns with solid roofs, concrete floors and floor

scrapers where cows are fully housed for long periods of time.

Does it apply to HerdHomes®

shelters with clear roofs (sunlight streaming in), free-draining slatted floors and a management system that focuses around on/off grazing?

No, it does not.

This has been borne out by discussions with farmers throughout New Zealand and, just as importantly, their vets, who are actually dealing with farms with HerdHomes® shelters.

In some cases, lameness actually decreases, as one farmer commented at the World Lameness Conference in Rotorua a few years ago.

This does not mean the European research is incorrect; it is just being used incorrectly.

HerdHomes® has spent the past 12 years developing and fine-tuning its options and has worked alongside both New Zealand and offshore research institutes and, just as importantly, alongside New Zealand farmers who are actually using these facilities.

This means we have a better understanding of what does and does not work in New Zealand conditions.

For more information, call 0800HerdHomes or www.herdhomes.co.nz.

Copy: Supplied



HAVE YOU SEEN THE CHANGES?



225% more storage than earlier models



Self cleaning dry free stalls



Improved drying of floors



Patented airflow—warmer in winter, cooler in summer



Stronger—rated for 176km/hour winds



Proven, flexible, profitable animal friendly

Come and see us at Waimumu

0800 HERDHOMES®

NZ Patent Numbers: 521150, 544190, 550635, 545042. Further patents pending. International Patent Numbers: 2003267874, 03748807.9. Further patents pending