

# Conversion focus in Canterbury

The saying 'Do it once, do it right' applies perfectly to a new farm conversion.

Generally taking on a conversion project gives farmers the huge benefit of a blank canvas. This means, not only can infrastructure be designed and placed ideally for both labour and cow requirements, but it can also be future proofed for environmental and animal welfare considerations.

Obviously then the farm design will be a match of infrastructure, regulatory standards and desired farm system.

So let's look at these three areas:

1. Farm infrastructure – historically this is where the industry has focused and there are a lot of good options in this space whether it is cowsheds, water supply, irrigation, sheds, feed pads, effluent systems etc. Easy to view and easy to price but not always easy

to understand their impact on the farm's bottom line.

2. Regulatory standards – This is constantly changing but one thing is certain, environmental and animal welfare standards will be tougher than now and will be enforced.

3. Farm system – Does this have anything to do with a conversion? Should it even be discussed in setting up or changing any farm design? The basic farm operating system hasn't change in 40 years so should you look at it? Yes you bet your bottom dollar you should. Why? Because the first two points introduce new technology AND new constraints to our current farming system.

Why shouldn't farmers have a new farm system that captures the latest advances, exceeds regulatory standards, and improves returns?

Many of today's top farmers already receive the gains from incorporating some of these changes, but the bigger gains come once the complete farm system is understood and adopted.

Farmers need options to meet all of today's and tomorrow's standards.

Land needs to grow as much sustainable feed as possible and be converted to milk solids as efficiently as possible. Cows need to walk and graze as part of being a normal healthy cow.

To manage soils, pasture, crop, staff, effluent and stock is a complex juggling act but it can all be achieved without compromise. This can be achieved with a new system of farming a change to our current industry standard but it will require the appropriate infrastructure.

At various times throughout the year (wet winters, stormy springs, and dry summers as examples) stock will need to be off paddock. HerdHomes® shelters give the flexibility, environmental safety and future welfare protection to meet these needs. If farmers are not relaxed about their off-paddock facility then it will not be used enough throughout the season, resulting in less benefit and a drop to the profit line.

Analysis of an existing farm with HerdHomes® shelters shows that their significant production gains have come at a cost of \$10/kg MS plus simplified their system, allowed them to winter at home and taken out seasonal variation in production.

Albert Einstein once said: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results". New Zealand farming needs to change.