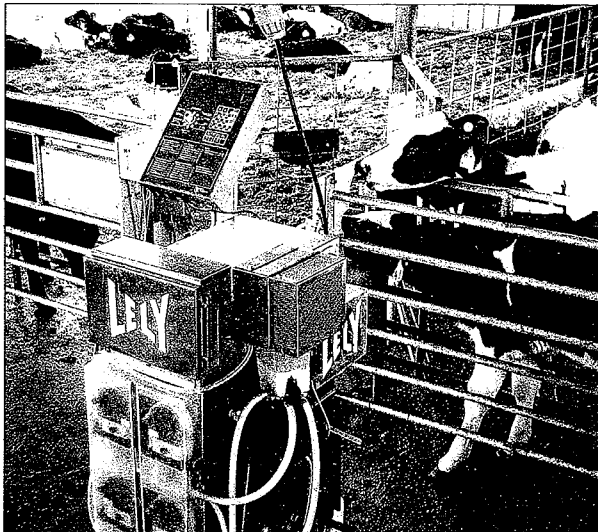


# Automatic feeder caters for up to 150 calves



Lely has more than 2000 automated calf feeding systems operating worldwide. The machines adjust the volumes and mix to suit the age of the calves during the rearing cycle.

As labour costs rise and workloads get pushed over seasonal peaks, more dairy farmers are looking at automation to ease the pressure and stresses.

A typical area where automation has helped improve productivity is in calf rearing. In the past 12 months after extensive trial work, Lely have released their automated calf-rearing systems, targeting large scale dairy operators.

Lely New Zealand general manager Peter Vis says calves are often last on the list in job priorities, and sometimes don't receive all the attention they deserve when things get hectic over spring time.

The automated Calm rearing systems can feed from 50 to 150 calves and Lely have over 2000 in operation around the world. Vis is coy on how many are in operation in New Zealand but says they have been purchased by operators in both North and South Islands.

Calves are fitted with electronic ear tags that are read by the machine's processor. It will identify the calf's age, the volume of milk required and dispense it accordingly. Meal dispensers can also be attached.

The machines are capable of operating on either whole milk or milk powder, and can have a combination of powder and whole milk set ups. Heavy use of stainless steel throughout the machine ensures a high level of durability and ease of cleaning.

Rearers can programme the machine to dispense on a per group or per calf basis, providing an amount equal to the calf growth stage.

A typical pattern may be a four-day-old calf starting off with 2 litres, peaking at 6 litres a day after three weeks, then being wound down to less than a litre a day before weaning after six weeks.

The programme will adjust volumes accordingly, even dispensing water only towards the end of the calf's milk regime to aid weaning.

Alarms can be activated to notify rearers of calves not consuming the amount they should be, providing early warning of health problems and ultimately reducing mortality.

If a calf begins scouring electrolytes can be run through the machine, and it will cut back on milk delivery until the calf has recovered.

The top-line models feature an auto-cleaning system and built in scales for matching weight gain to feed levels.

The system's processor can highlight the length of time different calves take to drink, with the shortest being less than a minute to the longest taking over 2.5 minutes.

Paul Bardoul from the Waikato rears 120 replacements on the machine, with a split calving in spring and autumn.

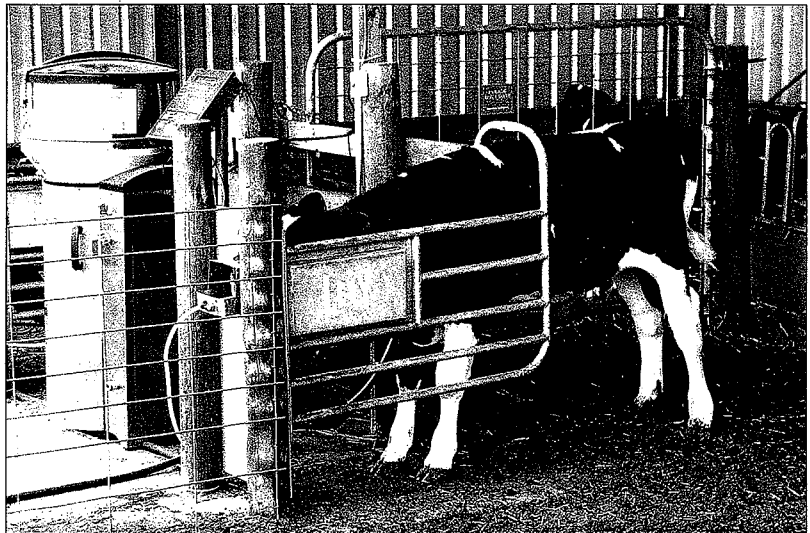
"I admit to being nervous about using the machine at first, but after 48 hours we could see the calves had adapted very well to the technology."

The variance in calf drinking time highlighted to him how calves were missing out under the old ad-lib teat system.

Rearers also report having more time to spend on calves in a less pressurised environment, taking time to see how individuals were doing, rather than dealing with larger hungry mobs twice a day.

Set up costs vary from a 60 calf capacity machine that will cost \$19,000 to a four-station machine capable of feeding 150 calves costing approximately \$40,000. Vis says payback depends on the room for improvement. This is for example how a farm manages labour normally used for calf rearing, the current calf mortality rate, scouring problems and conversion rate of feed into healthy growth.

"One of the biggest advantages is that it frees your staff up to carry out more important duties over that busy time."



Lely's new automated Calm rearing system can handle either whole milk or milk powder.

## Harvey Farms

### START YOUR CALVES AT THE TOP!

- A high-energy calf feed which the calves will find easy to eat and digest.
- High fibre Lucerne chaff to stimulate early rumen development.
- Contains Rumensin for coccidiosis control and maximum growth enhancement.
- Includes extruded Maize for palatability and increased nutrients.

TopCalf Cereal	
Protein	18%
U.D.P	9%
Fibre	12% (max)
EST Energy	13.0 MJ/kg
Crude fat	5.0% (max)

**Harvey Farms**

For further information ask your nearest merchant or call

# 0800 650 505

## BARLEYTOWN

### Stockfeed Manufacturers and Grain Suppliers

Grains	- whole
	- ground
	- kibbled
	- crushed
Stockfeed specialists	- calves
	- horses
	- pigs
	- chooks
	(or made to order)

From 25kgs up

Competitive prices. Contact the mill direct on 06 329 0705 or call at Barleytown, 1495 Rongotea Rd, Kairanga.

## Weevil control underway

AgResearch has applied to the Environmental Risk Management Agency (ERMA) for approval to release a parasitic wasp to control the clover root weevil.

It attacks clover all year round causing marked declines in clover content and quality in pastures.

The worst affected farmers have to apply very high levels of nitrogen fertiliser at costs of around \$300/ha to maintain soil fertility and farm profitability.

Public submissions on the application close on July 13, 2005.