First step for Advanced Robot

This autumn Advanced Nutrition will launch the UK's first dedicated robotic milking division to better service dairy farmers in this rapidly growing sector.

Advanced Robot will build upon over 10 years of experience with robotic milking and offer farmers a tailored 3 point programme to encompass everything from robot settings, to nutrition, to health and shed design.

It is estimated that 8% of UK farms already use robotic milking but they also constitute 35% of new milking systems being purchased. In Holland, 40% of dairy farms are automated, with some Scandinavian countries as high as 50%.

Managing a farm with robotics requires a different approach from conventional milking. We have found over the years the key to success is to begin by correctly balancing 3 key areas like points on a triangle – cow nutrition, cow health and robot settings. Any one of these areas taken in isolation can potentially knock the others out of sync.
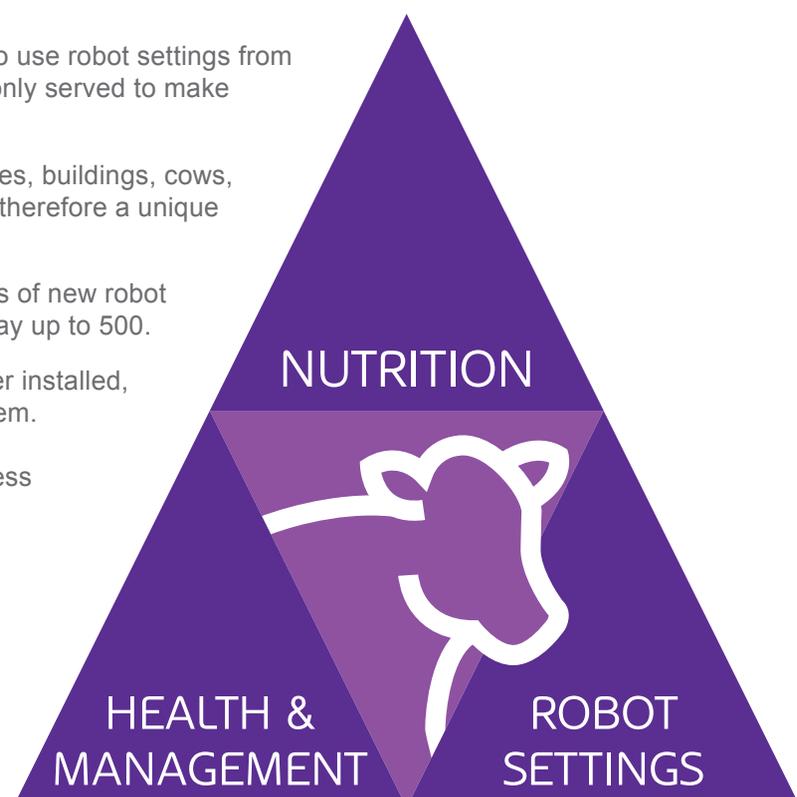
We regularly find dairy farmers who have tried to use robot settings from another farm to solve issues but often this has only served to make the problems worse.

Each farm is unique to itself, with different forages, buildings, cows, production expectations and health challenges; therefore a unique action plan is required to deliver results.

As a company, we have been involved in dozens of new robot start-ups over the years, from 50 cows all the way up to 500.
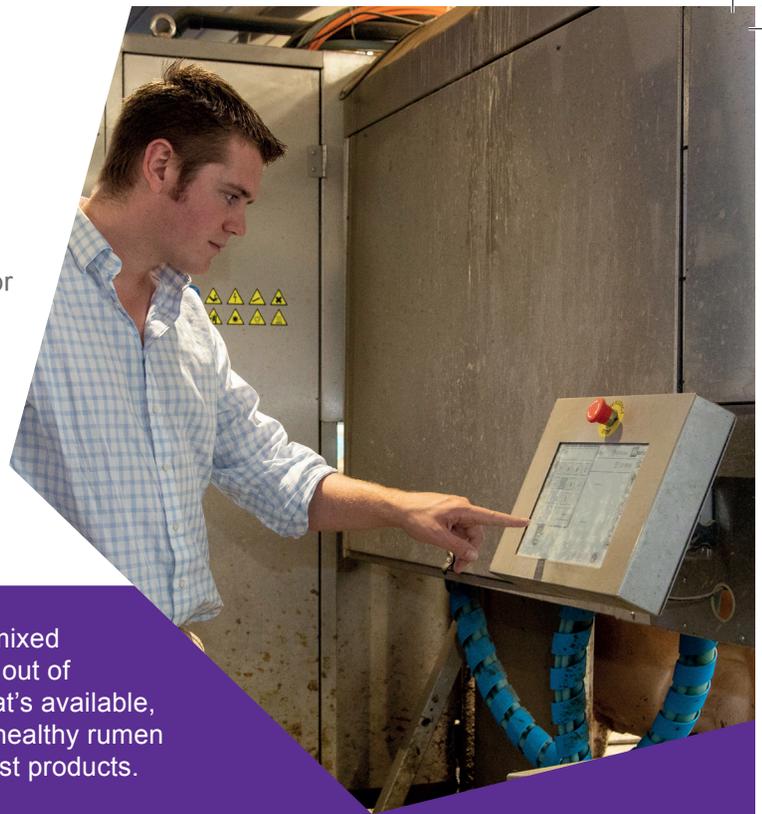
An increasing number of larger herds have either installed, or are in the process of installing, a robotic system.

Regardless of herd size, our principles for success never change.

NUTRITION

HEALTH & MANAGEMENT

ROBOT SETTINGS

Healthy cows are paramount with a particular emphasis on healthy feet. Not only do lame cows eat less often, but they also visit the robot less, which affects the average number of milking's, and therefore milk yield as well as fertility. For this reason, we use Zinpro's FirstStep® programme – a system for the assessment and prevention of lameness in dairy cows.

Getting the nutritional balance right on an AMS unit is something we have worked hard to perfect over the past decade. As on any farm there are basic fundamental steps which need to be followed. Balancing the diet both in and out of robot is critical to producing profitable milk and ensuring optimum visits.

On most farms this balance needs to be struck between the mixed ration and in parlour feed but on others there may also be an out of parlour feed option or grazing gates. Again, regardless of what's available, the Advanced Robot principles remain the same to ensure a healthy rumen and therefore a healthy cow, supported by a range of specialist products.

Different farm situations, diets, cows, and yield aspirations will determine how the robots are set up for each individual farm. Settings which work well on one unit will not necessarily work on another unit; therefore a tailored approach is required.

As a general rule, a robotic system must beat a 3 x per day milking herd; therefore average visits of 3 or greater should be targeted with a milk increase of minimum 10% to cover the investment cost versus a conventional parlour. This should easily be achieved from less standing time (during milking), higher dry matter intakes and more milking's per cow, especially in early lactation.

We believe that by taking a total farm, and having a complete understanding of the balance between cow health, nutrition and robot settings will provide the key to unlocking true potential and profitability on AMS farms.

FirstStep
F R O M ZINPRO®

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