

# Efficiency the driving force

There's no missing the Symmans family's new dairy.

Located at the end of a road not far from Whakatāne, the new streamlined dairy is framed with hills on one side, and trees on the other. The fact that the dairy has been in operation, milking 400 cows twice-a-day for most of the 2023/2024 season, is not evident in the interior, which is, quite literally, sparkling.

Lyn Symmans owns the farm, and her son Sam Symmans and partner Colleen Webb are 50/50 sharemilkers. The trio, who admit the overall goal of the new dairy was compliance, are evidently proud of what's been achieved.

"My Grandfather and father have owned and operated part of this farm since the 1970s," says Sam. "[With] Our family adding the portion which now contains

the new dairy in 2018. Accessing the old 30-aside herringbone required the tanker to cross a bridge which the cows also had to cross.

"We would have had to build a second bridge to remain compliant, combined with the need for a new effluent system for the consent renewal."

Sam says the System 3 farm has three barns where the cows are fed supplements each day. "It made sense to build a new dairy close to the barns to optimise efficiency and reduce the cow's walking distances."

## Cost-effective option

When it came to the optimum size, Sam and Colleen say herd numbers meant a herringbone was the most cost-effective option. "We didn't want to be doing more than 10 rows per milking and didn't want

any more than two people in the pit, so we settled on a 40-aside.

"We went with a 'tweaked' Chapman design dairy – with open sides behind the vat stand, which separates – at one end – the pump room, supply room and milk room and, at the other end, the office and toilet. There is a covered corridor between the milking area and office block with bench space for such things as herd testing.

Sam says the orientation of the building was tailored to suit the site. "Traditionally dairies face the north but if we applied that logic it would have meant the tanker would have to cross the cow path to and from the shed – so we opted to orientate

it to the south. So far, the open design provides enough warmth and is relatively sheltered from the prevailing wind."

In the second week of January 2023 site development commenced with the groundwork for the dairy and adjacent Klip Tank foundations, constructed by Superior Excavation of Whakatāne.

Superior Excavation's Leigh Carter says: "Significant earthworks were required to excavate and build up the dairy building platform, and the site for the new Klip Tank". "We were able to access a seam of pumice on the farm and, in all, probably transported around 6000 cubic metres to both sites.

"Superior Excavation is one of the only contractors in the greater Bay of Plenty

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Farm owner Lyn Symmans with son Sam Symmans and partner Colleen Webb.



The new effluent system – sand traps, bunker and Kliptank.



King Farm Services' Robbie Hall with technician Marshall Bagnall.

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who have a sharp grade laser on our posi-track which speeds up and adds a huge degree of accuracy and precision to the final building platform," says Leigh.

### Chiller panel

The new dairy was constructed by Bay Builders, in conjunction with Yates Carpentry & Construction's Alex Yates of Whakatāne.

"We had a builder on-site from January 2023 for about three months," says Sam.

"The buildings are clad in chiller panel with a long run iron roof over the milking area. The pit is wide and deep in a modern design, which enhances milker comfort and efficiency. The pump room has also been positioned at the back end of the shed to minimise noise in the milking area and increase vacuum pump efficiency," says Sam.

King Farm Services of Whakatāne supplied and installed the milking machine, water and effluent systems.

King's project manager Robbie Hall says the dairy is equipped with a Delaval 40 HL-HB swingover with EP100B electronic pulsation. The vacuum system is a Delaval LVP4500 and the cooling system a double-bank plate cooler with chilled water on one side. "The dairy features full stainless steel washdown and water systems," says Robbie.

"We also supplied a complete effluent system consisting of double stone-traps and bunker – provided and installed by Able Precast Solutions – leading to a sump with transfer pump to the Kliptank.

"Irrigation to pasture is direct from the Kliptank via a fully automated Varisco pump which applies effluent via a Torpedo rain irrigator."

Robbie says King Farm Services provide design and installation of all milking, water and effluent systems including fabrication and welding.

### Built to last

The yard and milking area steelworks

were completed by WJ Dippie of Tāneatua, who have built a reputation, across more than 76 years, for engineering which is built to last.

Grandson of the founder, Bill Dippie says they "look at every aspect of every job, looking for those little enhancements which will increase the life and/or efficiency of the job".

"In these yards, for example, we made the rails around the exit yards higher, 1600mm, to discourage cows from jumping out. We also built strengthened galvanised steel posts to support the breast rails in the shed to ensure they last. We built all yards including the backing gates."

Sam says they had previously experienced cow lameness which had been "managed" in the drafting race of the old shed.

"Including a Wrangler Cattle Crush was an essential item in the new dairy's animal handling yards; it's brilliant. Makes treating lame cows a lot easier, and more

comfortable for the cow."

The Wrangler's Wilco Klein Ovink says the Wrangler quickly and simply adjusts to different size cows, adding that in the last year they've developed a crush for cows above 650kg.

### Comfortable to milk in

Whakatāne-based Mathis Electrical did all of the electrical work for the new build – from bonding underground mesh to eliminate stray voltage, to all electrical wiring of the dairy and effluent system. The new dairy was commissioned in September 2023, with Sam and Colleen saying the cows were challenged for the first milking but quickly settled.

"The swingarms on the cups take clutter out of the pit and improve cup alignment, making it a comfortable shed to milk in. The shed has been set up so in future we can add auto cup removers, auto drafting and in-shed feeding," says Sam. *Clare Bayly*

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