

## DAIRY MODERNIZATION

By Dino Giacomazzi

Top 5 dairy management tools on your smartphone

# Using mobile apps

My great grandfather started milking cows on our farm in Central California in 1893. I'll bet he was eager to try the newest technologies available at the time. Innovations like diesel engines and pneumatic tires must have been as magical in his day as sexed semen and genomics are now.

As technology advances so does the complexity of our business. Issues like volatility, regulations, and animal welfare are forcing us to optimize efficiency like never before. These issues are causing us to spend more time in the office managing information and less time out with the cows.

But now you can take your office to the corral, thanks to mobile technology like smartphones and tablets. Here are five technologies I use every day to help manage my operation:

**1. Keep track of cows:** Most herd management software has a companion mobile app. Pocket Cow Card for DairyComp 305, Pocket DHI-Plus, PocketDairy Android and Farmeron.com are a few. These apps provide access to cow records in the palm of your hand, even when you aren't at the dairy. Many of them connect up with RFID readers, which makes finding cows a snap.

Mobile apps simplify data entry, a time consuming process prone to mistakes. This is important when venturing into new technologies like genomics and milk-based pregnancy testing. With these operations it is critical to match the cow with the sample.

At the end of each test day, time is spent sorting out missing and miskeyed IDs since My DHIA doesn't have RFID readers. If you think accurate milk weights are important, imagine relying on hand punched numbers for pregnancies or heifer culling decisions.

**2. Keep track of paper and files:** I have a bad habit of throwing pieces of paper on the dashboard of my truck while driving with the windows open. As you can imagine, many important documents wind up on the side of the road. To combat this genetic flaw, I have implemented a paperless office system.

The first step to go paperless is to get the paper into a digital format. I use the Fujitsu Scansnap 1500 Scanner. This nifty little breadbox-looking device will scan up to 50 pages of two sided color documents in about a minute.

Once scanned, the included software will read all documents and embed the text within the PDF file.

This makes the files searchable. Now that your paper is digital, use a file syncing service like Dropbox or Google Drive to access it from your mobile devices and computers.

We scan our bills, permits, insurance documents, and all paper dairy records. Having access to these documents in the barn office, the home office and on the road makes life simple and more efficient.

**3. Keep track of tasks:** There are a lot of things to do on a dairy and managing lists can be difficult. Remember The Milk is a simple yet powerful app for tracking tasks. Each morning I meet with my managers, then walk the dairy looking for things to be done. I type or speak tasks into my phone. Each task gets tagged with keywords like #fix, #town, #call, #office or #cows, then given a priority and due date. I can also assign tasks to each employee and Remember the Milk shares it with them.

**4. Keep track of time:** Google Calendar is a great way to keep track of where you need to be. It's also good at managing cycles on your dairy. We use Google Calendar to track days off, schedules and our routine dairy tasks like shots, equipment maintenance and pen moves. The best feature of Google Calendar is its ability to share calendars with others.

**5. Keep track of everything else:** Evernote is an app that helps you organize all kinds of information in notebooks. You can keep typed or handwritten notes, documents, emails, web pages and just about everything else in one place. An example of this is equipment maintenance. I have a note for each tractor. In that note I have a PDF of the service manual, typed notes on service and repairs, and scans of repair invoices. I also keep the make, model, and serial number, the filter numbers and other replacement parts information.

Even though technology has changed since 1893, the core principles of dairying remain the same. Hard work, animal care, and family are our foundations, and technology helps us do it better. □

## FYI

■ **Dino Giacomazzi** is the 4th generation to operate Giacomazzi Dairy in Hanford, California. He lives on the farm with his 100 year-old grandmother, mother, wife and sons Miro (6) and Gio (1). Contact him at [www.dinogiacomazzi.com](http://www.dinogiacomazzi.com).