



Dr Kidega (centre) explains to Prof Ogenga Latigo (left) how a Dairy Herd monitor operates at his farm in Gulu. PHOTO BY TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY

## Dairy Herd Monitor is a real deal

A dairy Herd Monitor helps farmers to accurately identify individual-cow milk production. The device also helps you better understand the performance of your herd and identify opportunities to adjust management areas on your farm. writes **TOBBIAS JOLLY OWINY.**

need attention at any given time, and this is clearly programmed on the monitor. "The monitor gives a clear focus on performance indicators and helps a farmer to track daily output, nutrition programme, animal reproduction, genetics, animal health and marketing," he says. The following are the breakdown of what a monitor can help a farmer do:

- Animal health and disease (cull rate from the milking herd, days between mastitis onsets, vet and medicine costs per cow per year, number of lame cow incidents per 100 cows per year).
- Genetics, sales and marketing.

### How to get started

A dairy cattle breeder avoids the term 'profit per cow per year' but brags in terms of animal records or enterprise performance yet it is profit per cow that covers living costs and provides return on investment.

In that regard therefore, Dr Kidega says the task of developing a herd monitoring programme for your farm can be daunting but you need to identify the followings;

**90**  
DAYS OF CALCULATING PERCENTAGE OF COWS DETECTED FOR HEAT, PREGNANCY RATE.

- Nutrition (dry matter intake per cow per day, feed cost per cow per day, cost per tonne for feed consumed by the milking herd).
- Reproduction (services per conception, per cent of cows detected in heat by 90 days in milk, pregnancy rate, day's open, calving interval).
- Heifer rearing (live heifer calves per 100 milking cows per year, per cent of heifer calves, born live, that enter the milking herd, rearing cost per heifer, age at first calving).

It is true that the hard climatic and economic times have stretched to hit animals even harder since the cost of managing a herd of animals have gone higher than usual.

This is even worsened by the rapidly changing pasture quality and quantity due to climate change.

However, Dr Tonny Kidega, a senior veterinary specialist in Gulu, revealed that with a dairy herd monitor, a farmer can manage animals systematically at the lowest cost possible to achieve a higher yield. When things get tough, a farmer ought to consider developing a plan for a new direction which is best achieved through a clearly drawn herd monitor.

According to Dr Kidega, a farmer knows what and when they can expect something per cow.

### Advantages of a herd monitor

He says each farm and its manager have individual needs and factors that

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