New Release

20 August 2024

For Immediate Use

**Stockman is the prime piece of kit**

Robbie Newlands lives and farms by one rule – simplicity. Based on 1,100 acres (445ha) near the town of Forres in Moray, Cluny Farm is home to Robbie and his wife Kirsty. Keen to make more data-led decisions on his finishing stock, Robbie installed the Stockman - an automatic, precision performance monitor - from Herd Advance.

An upland unit, Cluny is primarily a livestock farm with circa 180 head of Simmental and Saler cows and 700 Mule ewes with all progeny finished on-farm. Around 170 acres of barley is grown and used as feed in the fattening operation.

Robbie explained the Stockman system as a weigh crate linked to a water trough that all cattle must pass through every time they drink. It records identification, weight of each animal, their water intake and, in fattening operations like his, the automatic drafting of animals to separate pens, by pre-set criteria such as weight, breed, or age – all managed by the easy-to-use app.

“The older building where I fatten heifers is not ideally set up for handling equipment or a cattle race, but the Stockman was perfect for sitting in an otherwise unused part of the steading. It was just a case of diverting the water supply and attaching cattle hurdles to guide the stock to and from the crate.

“The heifers quickly adapted to going there for a drink and the change in their behaviour has been remarkable – normally asking an animal to walk into an enclosed unit like a crush instantly creates high stress levels, but they have become so used to the several-times-a-day process that we can stand by the Stockman now and they come and go without a second thought,” Robbie commented.

Jilly Duncan Grant, Chief Executive Officer at Herd Advance said: “As cattle farmers, we experience the same daily challenges that our customers face. The motivation to develop our technology arose from the shortage of employable labour willing to work with cattle, their lack of necessary skills, and concerns about safety.

“My previous roles in data-driven industries made me aware of the significant opportunities available in the beef sector to enhance production efficiencies, profitability, and animal welfare through real-time monitoring that supports decision-making. We just had to develop a practical solution to deliver this and that’s where Stockman was born.

“The simple measures of weight, water intake and temperature provide a strong correlation to health, stress and profitability of the herd and can be utilised by both suckler and finisher units, across large- and small-scale enterprise.”

The Newlands’ send all their fat stock to ABP at Perth and, when it came to selecting cattle for the abattoir before having the Stockman, Robbie would do this all by eye.

Now it’s a case of pre-setting selection criteria on the Herd Advance app around 24 hours before the lorry is due, then, as the heifers at the target weight come for a drink, they are automatically diverted to a holding pen instead of back to the main pen. Robbie said that, by the end of the day there might be 10 animals, at ideal weights ready to go, with no handling nor stress for the animals or the farmers.

Robbie added: “Kirsty used to have to work the gate for the ones I was picking out and it was a part of the job she really didn’t like; it was usually a bit of a rodeo and no doubt a risky job to do. Not only does the Stockman eliminate the need for handling the beasts but also means that we’re only sending them at accurate weights, which improves our profitability – for example, every heifer that is 10kg heavier might increase profits by £5,000 over the course of the year.”

A knock-on benefit could be meat eating quality, Robbie said, because it’s well known that stress is one of the biggest factors affecting tenderness, so the more that can be done to decrease any stress before the journey to the abattoir is a good thing.

Robbie foresees other benefits that the system could bring to the management of the cattle and the wider business.

“Efficiencies in the beef sector could be improved massively by using systems like this one. The more information you have, the more inclined you are to pick cattle at the right point and weights that the market is demanding. With temperature sensors now available for the Stockman too, a beast that is showing early signs of illness could be picked up straight away and not only reduce antibiotic use in the sector, but also animal losses too.”

“For other operations there could be real advantages, such as cattle being fattened at grass, to have something like this in the field that negates the need for gathering in or weighing would be such a time saver, something that every farmer could do with more of. To have more data on any kind of operation, whether it’s fattening, store or breeding cattle - weights and feed efficiency are hot topics just now.”

By just going for a drink, the volume of valuable data that the Stockman is capable of gathering from each animal is "staggering” and it will allow farmers the opportunity to meet a multitude of market demands, yet it involves no real human input to capture it– what could be simpler than that?

Herd Advance will be demonstrating the Stockman system at a Farmstrong Scotland event on ***Friday 23 August on Robbie’s farm at Cluny***. For more information or to book a place go to [Walk & Talk at Cluny Farm, Forres - Farmstrong Scotland](https://www.farmstrongscotland.org.uk/events/walk-talk-at-cluny-farm-forres).

More information on Herd Advance and the Stockman can be found here <https://www.herdadvance.co.uk/>

**Notes to editors:**

Herd Advance was founded by Aberdeenshire farmers Jilly Duncan Grant CEO and Murdoch Duncan COO. The tech company seamlessly brings together practical hardware and precision data, with real-time software.

Stockman, the innovative herd solution provides customers and end-users with a system that enables performance and health monitoring through high welfare stressless remote weighing, alongside automated drafting and selection of livestock. Paired with a cutting-edge mobile application it allows farmers to monitor 24/7 the statistics and status of their herd on-the-go from a smartphone or device.

For more information go to [Herd Advance | Transforming Beef Farm Performance](https://www.herdadvance.co.uk/) and find us on the usual social media platforms.