

# Pioneering ET technology for commercial farmers

It is acknowledged worldwide the fastest and most economical method of genetic multiplication in dairy cattle is embryo transfer (ET). Dr Andre Northey, ET team leader at Synergy Farm Health, says farmers should not make it a one cow gamble.

ET has historically been used to increase reproduction rates in high value pedigree cows, but Dr Northey is pioneering a change geared around commercial dairy farmers.

Dr Northey has designed an ET strategy to improve the economic performance across the whole herd.

He says: "By targeting the hardiest, healthiest and most productive animals using a herd ET strategy, farmers will be able

to change the productivity, health and welfare of the herd significantly in a period of as few as five years.

"All farmers know which are their best cows and why. We work to identify the top 5 per cent of a herd according to the animal quality traits which work best for them, including production, longevity or health, best fertility, least lameness and least mastitis.

## Productivity

"Cows are used for embryo recovery to produce more calves from the hardiest, healthiest and most productive animals, whatever their breeding.

"The best cow in the herd is the high yielding one which never gets lame, never gets mas-



Dr Andre Northey

tis, always gets in-calf first time and always produces a normal healthy calf without any calving

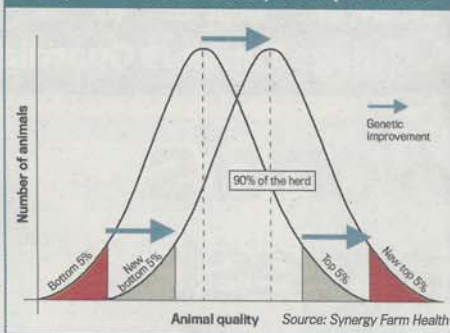
related problems. By flushing cows such as these within a herd ET strategy, farmers can breed for traits which have already been well-proven in their farm environment over many years.

"The costs of producing a single ET heifer are about £500. Farmers should ask themselves whether they could buy replacement animals into the herd to deliver the quality traits they want for this price."

Following a two-year research project, Synergy Farm Health has developed ET figures based on an average of four embryos per flush giving two pregnancies which produce an ET bull and an ET heifer.

For a 100-cow herd with a 25 per cent replacement rate, figures show flushing the top

## Herd performance shift by embryo transfer



five cows once per year over five years will deliver 30 per cent improved ET genetics in herd replacements within the first year and 37.5 per cent of improved ET genetics across the entire herd after five years.

## Flushing

If the top 5 per cent of cows are flushed twice a year over five years, these figures rise to a 50

per cent improvement of ET genetics in herd replacements in year one and 62.5 per cent improved ET genetics across the entire herd by year five.

Dr Northey says: "It is possible to flush the best cows three times per year over five years and achieve an incredible 87.5 per cent improved ET genetic across the entire herd after on five to six years."