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TECH NOTE: RMS Trainer Roundtable

Matt Aikenhead
ABS Australia Technical Services Consultant
Matt Aikenhead is Australia’s Technical Services Consultant. He works with customers on troubleshooting reproduction, setting up reproduction protocols and training on-farm staff on A.I. while working with ABS technicians.

Jesus Berumen
Genus ABS RMS Training Program Trainer
Dr. Jesus Berumen is the Genus ABS RMS Training Program Trainer. He focuses on teaching trainees all the principles of RMS such as discipline, professionalism, cleanliness, organization, etc. to take back to their business area.

Phil Salkeld
Genus ABS European Technical Services Representative
Phil Salkeld is the European Technical Services Representative. Throughout his Genus ABS career of 10+ years he has trained and developed RMS technicians, in-house breeders and customers, standardizing the RMS offering in Europe and Russia.

Hans Vromans
ABS Italia RMS Manager
Hans Vromans is the RMS Manager in Italy. He currently manages 4 RMS Team Leaders with 29 full-time RMS technicians. He is responsible for visiting RMS key accounts to assist with solution implementation and/or troubleshooting, while providing training for current and future RMS technicians.

Roger Sundberg
ABS Global District Business Manager
Roger Sundberg is the District Business Manager for Ohio, Indiana and Michigan, in which he manages 10 RMS technicians, in addition to the sales business. He offers a great basic RMS training program for all global technicians just starting out, introducing them to the ABS-way to RMS.

Given that Genus ABS provides a global solution called Reproductive Management System® (RMS) to over 2000 dairies in 7 different countries, we must have a robust team of RMS Trainers to ensure this team of 300+ technicians, walking behind nearly 650,000 cows, is well-equipped. Find their insight on providing a successful RMS service below.

What are the three keys to the success of RMS in your area?
Jesus: Training, commitment and support. RMS technicians should attend a training session to ensure they perform the ABS standards in the field. In addition, RMS technicians should be committed to do their best on a daily basis, offering a professional service and increasing profitability for both, their dairies and ABS. Lastly, managers need to be involved in their performance and to help with issues that arise.

Phil: Motivated staff, professionalism and team approach. RMS is only as good as the technicians. Dairy reproductive performance needs to be as important to the technician as it is to the customer, requiring dedication to training and 100% concentration throughout the day. Technicians need to be on time, enthusiastic and self-confident, ensuring the customer’s business is in professional hands. Technicians should know they have the support from team leaders, managers and technical services to call as needed.

Hans: Consistency, high quality staff with team approach and data analysis. RMS has to do with consistent heat detection and efficient breeding. This can only be done with passionate, high caliber technicians and collaboration with the management team of the farm. Without adequate data input and analysis, no efficient decisions can be made to make great results. Good recordkeeping and decision making on data analysis is the key to success!

Roger: Teamwork, consistency and training. Technicians hired on the team become indoctrinated into the culture. Everyone has to work together to achieve results through pregnancy production, flowing into consistency. Every person entering the dairy will do the same thing, make the same decisions, based on the provided data. They achieve this through consistent ABS training.

How have you adapted the standard RMS-way in your area?
Matt: We are 99% grazing in Australia so the only time heat detection and AI is possible is when the cows are being milked. Rotary dairies allow us to heat detect and Inseminate during milking by standing on a stand behind the cows as the platform rotates. This is however very time consuming due to technicians needing to be there the entire milking, so we often will only have one RMS herd per technician.

Phil: This starts with hiring the best staff you can find and then give them the tools to do the job. Training and more training is necessary. The Idaho RMS Training Program offers a great opportunity to educate and motivate our senior staff. We monitor all our staff’s performance and compare it to the senior, more experienced technicians. We now have team leaders in place that ride-along with technicians to maintain standards and give the technicians opportunity to ask any questions on a one-on-one basis. The UK
Technical Services team holds four, two-day fertility courses each year giving RMS technicians a chance to converse and learn from other technicians all over the country.

**Roger:** The ABS-way is very visible whether you are in Michigan, Indiana or Ohio. These are non-negotiable areas that every ABS RMS technician complies with.

**When it comes to training RMS technicians, what are some non-negotiables that they all must walk away knowing?**

**Matt:** Heat detection using different heat aids and proper thawing method.

**Jesus:** Good heat detection skills, proper and safe semen thawing and gun loading methods, confidence in making good breeding decisions, clean A.I. equipment, along with a good attitude

**Phil:** All of our RMS technicians are given the following non-negotiable list during their training:

- 1 glove/cow
- 1 clean wipe/cow
- Lubricant must be used
- No vaginal examinations
- Disinfection on and off every farm
- Clean, protective clothing bib and brace
- Correct gun warming and thawing procedure
- Clean vehicle
- Professional image
- DC305 daily input
- Herd report carried on-farm
- No dogs in vehicles
- No preg checking service
- No drug/hormone administration

**Hans:** Identifying heats, preparing semen and breeding cows

**Roger:** When you are out in the field, you represent ABS. Always portray a professional appearance personally and have a clean, well-organized truck.

**What does the future of RMS look like in your area?**

**Matt:** Given the environment of the Australian market, the standard RMS offering will need to be adapted so it’s more affordable to customers yet efficient for the ABS business. Current customers value it as a means to get their cows pregnant efficiently. RMS herds are typically done during the afternoon milking, while the normal AI runs (call-ins) are done in the morning.

**Jesus:** I believe RMS has a great future because the dairy industry needs people to help operations achieve success, know about sync protocols and mating programs, and be able to breed a large amount of cows without compromising fertility.

**Phil:** The UK presently has over 160,000 cows on RMS and it’s growing. Dairy herds in the UK are getting fewer but cow numbers are constant so with herds getting larger, I believe RMS will continue to grow. I was recently at a meeting where a customer said “If there was a Queen’s Award to agriculture it should be awarded to Genus RMS!” Not a bad accolade.

**Hans:** RMS results are very good in Italy. Word is spread among customers about the consistent, good work done on farm leading to an annual growth of 10% in cow numbers. Currently, our technicians walk behind 40,000 cows on a daily basis for over 140 dairy herds.

**Roger:** All the RMS areas concentrate on maintenance meanwhile looking for new profitable opportunities. The competition is fierce and constantly putting pressure on our program. The mindset is to grow but be smart about how it is done. Always look for ways to be more efficient and lean but aggressive.

**What’s your biggest RMS challenge/opportunity in your area?**

**Matt:** Our biggest challenge would be getting quality techs.
Jesus: The biggest challenges are to implement the principles of RMS with current employees and new hires, to make all personnel understand the importance of our professional services and lastly, to ensure everyone performs 110% every day.

Phil: Finding the right staff is always a challenge. We require they bring with them cow knowledge, a strong work ethic and the ability to communicate with fellow farmers. As farms get larger the need for tighter reproductive performance grows thus providing an opportunity for RMS. We have found when offering the Breeder Tag system as a reproductive solution, dairy owners are more inclined to want to implement RMS instead. Customers want an efficient reproductive service.

Hans: The biggest challenge at this moment is to keep farmers in business, which is also an opportunity. RMS is a winning bet on farms that need extra fertility to become profitable and ready for the future.

Roger: Adding other solutions like the AFI system and udder care products in our portfolio, we are able to meet our growing customer’s needs as we see they want to perform more efficiently, at a higher level. As always creating pregnancies is the main priority, but our team strives to find solutions that will assist our customers.