



An interview with Dr Peter Edmondson



Peter has 35 years of experience in dairy practice in Ireland, the UK and overseas and currently runs Udderwise, a veterinary consultancy. Peter is a Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons specialist in cattle health and production. He has written two practical mastitis handbooks and co-authored others. He is a regular presenter at conferences and contributes to the veterinary and farming press. Peter is passionate about helping to transfer skills to the dairy industry in developing Africa.

Dr Peter Edmondson has a long history with cows. As a 14-year old, he worked on a local pig and dairy farm in rural Ireland. Initially, he wanted to be a doctor, but the vet at the farm suggested he follow his true passion and work with animals instead.

Five years after qualifying as a vet at Trinity College Dublin in 1980, Dr Edmondson spent two years in Saudi Arabia and China working for Almarai, a partnership between Irish entrepreneurs and brothers Alastair and Paddy McGuckian and Prince Sultan bin Mohammed bin Saud Al Kabeer.

This experience sowed the seeds for his specialisation and global expertise in mastitis. “The Saudis had herds of up to 2,500 cattle,” he says, “and the whole focus was on preventative medicine; maintaining healthy cattle and minimising mortality and morbidity. It was way ahead of the rest of the world. It was fascinating.”

On his return, he joined a 16-vet practice in Somerset in southwest UK and discovered a high level of clinical mastitis. At the time, farmers and dairy companies were facing significant pressure to reduce antibiotic use.

“I saw this as a big opportunity to promote the preventative practises I’d learned in Saudi,” he says. From 1992, he started to develop tailor-made training courses on mastitis for vets, dairy and pharmaceutical companies, becoming a global expert. He’s trained more than 600 vets in the UK alone in mastitis prevention.

The success of the whole process relies on a one-on-one approach with farmers, Dr Edmondson says. “To make any progress in preventative medicine as a vet you need to work closely with farmers. They have to be prepared to invest in your skills, but you need to spend a couple of hours with them, listen to what they are saying; find out what’s frustrating them.”

The next step is for vets to look at farmers’ milking parlours, examine the equipment they use and how they clean it, and give them some written guidelines on how they can prevent mastitis in future. Then keep in touch throughout as the farmers get their cows back on track.

He says that vets often make general and inaccurate assumptions about dairy farmers. “They totally underestimate the worry and stress that get farmers down about their cattle. Dairy farmers really love their cows. It affects their mental health much more than just worrying about the bottom line.”

In 2015, Dr Edmondson set up UdderWise and now consults on mastitis prevention around the world, working with dairy herds of more than 30,000 cattle in Saudi to single-cow subsistence farmers in Mozambique in Africa. “It’s a big eye-opener,” he says. He markets his services through his website and speaks at conferences and workshops internationally, and has authored two practical mastitis handbooks and co-authored others.

He’s visiting Melbourne for the first time to attend the Australian Veterinary Association conference in June, and will lead eight sessions across topics ranging from dairy farming around the world, to selective dry cow therapy and managing and motivating dairy staff.

Would you like to hear from veterinary experts in a wide range of fields?

Dr Peter Edmondson and many others will be speaking at the 2017 AVA Conference in Melbourne from 4 – 9 June. [Register now.](#)

Peter Edmondson’s sessions are:

-) Dairy farming in developing Africa
-) Managing and motivating staff in dairy practice
-) Marketing your services to farmers
-) Practical use of mastitis records
-) Selective dry cow therapy
-) The milking machine
-) Treatment of mastitis
-) Veterinary practice around the world