



News

Swiss Cows Able To Tell Farmers They're In Heat Via Text

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A cow grazes in a field. (Photo by ALEXANDER KLEIN/AFP/GettyImages)

ZOLLIKOFEN, Switzerland (CBS Seattle) – Swiss dairy cows may now be able to tell farmers that they are in heat using text message technology.

Sensors implanted in the cows are reportedly able to detect the shift using electronic heat detectors, according to The New York Times.

These sensors then send a text message to the farmer's phone. In addition to getting an alert, participating farmers can also opt to receive messages in either German, French or Italian – the three primary languages of Switzerland – as well as English or Spanish.

The devices, called heat detectors, could possibly curb a problem plaguing the Swiss dairy industry, where cows that feel pressured to produce greater quantities of milk are reportedly less frequently in heat than ever before.

An estimated 80 percent of cow impregnations are performed by an artificial inseminator, the Times learned, though sometimes bulls are still brought in to mate. Without a cow in heat to work with, however, the success rate of reproduction allegedly diminishes.

The new technology allows farmers to take advantage of mating opportunities as they come.

"Our recognition rate is about 90 percent," Claude Brielmann, a computer specialist who helped design the system, told the Times.

Though many in the industry are encouraged by the technological development, proponents of animal rights have reportedly expressed concern regarding the kind of stress placed on cows to necessitate such technology.

"The real problem [highlighted by the development and use of this technology] is the cows' not showing signs of heat, and this is linked with the demands made on cows to produce ever larger quantities of milk," Hansuli Huber, managing director of Tierschutz, an animal rights organization, told the paper.