

Holy Cow! Violet turns up the heat in cattle breeding

Aideen Sheehan

INSEMINATION is normally a man's job, but an Irish female entrepreneur is changing all that.

In fact she has been so successful, that she is now circumnavigating the globe to inseminate cows from here to New Zealand.

Violet Nevin from Westmeath has also cornered the market with a new device that lights up when a cow is in heat to warn farmers they're ready and waiting.

She has become the sole importer of the **EstroTECT Patch**, a scratch card-like device that you stick on to the cow's coat near the tail.

When the cow comes into heat, other animals will investigate, thus exposing the brightly-coloured inside label which tells the farmer the animal is now ready for artificial insemination (AI).

Violet learned about the patch when she was on her last trip to New Zealand where she spends a couple of months working each



Violet Nevin putting on an ESTROTECT Detector on a cow at a farm in Ballynacargy, Co Westmeath yesterday. JAMES FLYNN

year. With more and more farmers taking jobs away from the farm, it is becoming harder for them to keep a close watch on their cows to detect when they're in heat and require AI, resulting in a dramatic decline in its use here.

She started travelling to New Zealand to work three years ago soon after her husband died and now inseminates some 3,500 cows on the North Island during each trip.

When she returned, she set about acquiring the distribution rights for the heat

alert patch which has already convinced some part-time farmers to keep breeding cows because it makes the job much much easier.

Her work comes at a time when Agriculture Minister Mary Coughlan is urging farmers to use AI to improve the genetic quality of Irish cattle by using alpha Bulls.

Ms Coughlan said this week that AI use had declined dramatically to a very low level in Ireland but it could help produce better and more profitable cattle.