

UK Agri-Tech start-up lassoes deal with US ranchers

Innovative animal tracking collar Herdsy has secured its first US deals forecast at £1.4 million over the next five years.

The business will supply its technology to ranches in Texas and Oregon, in what is a game-changing opportunity to access the Texan market of over 12 million beef cattle. Herdsy will improve the decision-making process by providing ranchers with profit-focused, data-driven insights.

Herdsy has developed a collar equipped with advanced sensors and machine learning artificial intelligence (AI) to measure biomedical and activity data, such as heart rate, weight gain, and grazing patterns. This data provides livestock farmers with a complete overview of their cattle via the Herdsy website or app, alerting them in the event of atypical behaviour that could be detrimental to the value of the animal or its wellbeing. The information is then analysed against industry benchmarks, advising farmers on the ideal time to send animals to market, which in turn reduces time on farm per animal, costs whilst improving cash flow and profit margins.

Richard Hobson founded Herdsy in 2016 after coming up with the idea on his family's farm. A former IBM software developer and accountant, Richard then was mentored by his friend Dmitri Zaitsev, a Professor of Mathematics, to refine the technology.

After reaching out to the Department for International Trade (DIT) for export advice, Herdsy accelerated its entry to the US market, securing two partnerships in just 6 weeks. The business will co-develop a new product with the Texas Agriculture & Mechanical University, one of the biggest cattle names in the US. It has also gained a place with the Austin Technology Incubator to address one of the biggest issues facing the beef industry: sustainability.

Founder and CEO of Herdsy Richard Hobson said:

When lockdown started, one of our orders to South Africa was put on hold and I immediately began thinking of how we were going to be able to get through this difficult time. I realised with more people than ever having to work remotely that businesses all over the world were having to remodel, and "virtual" business meetings were necessary to do deals. So, I took the opportunity to set up video calls with high profile ranchers and partners in the United States and it worked!

Having worked with the Department for International Trade for a few years, they were pivotal in our success in Texas. We managed to secure calls and introductions that otherwise could have taken us

years to get.

We saw the appetite for Herdsy when one rancher from Oregon contacted us to order over 5000 collars to manage against wolf attacks.

Herdsy started exporting in 2016 and is currently used in four countries around the globe. The business is now planning to open an office in Texas to assist its expansion into neighbouring US states and South America.

In the four quarters to the end of Q2 2020, the US was the UK's largest trading partner with total trade between the two nations worth £221.6bn, an increase of £790m on the same period in the previous year.

Minister for Exports Graham Stuart said:

It is fantastic to see innovative companies such as Herdsy thriving in new markets, helping farmers on both sides of the Atlantic to monitor their animals and their profits more easily.

This is a great example of the US's strong appetite for British technology which will be boosted further when we strike a free trade agreement with the US.

Last month, for the first time in over two decades, UK beef made its way to the US, marking a historic moment for UK farmers and food producers.

The UK is currently negotiating a free trade deal with the US set to create a host of export opportunities for British goods and services trade, supporting small businesses from all around the UK. The fifth round of negotiations between the two nations got underway last week, 19 October 2020.