

WORKING ENVIRONMENT PRIZE FOR AGRICULTURE

2011





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THIS YEAR'S PRIZE WINNER

I/S Ravninggård (Farm Ravning) at Ribe receives the Working Environment Prize for Agriculture 2011.

Ravninggård is run by two generations of the Sørensen family: Søren and Hanne, and Ole and Bente Sørensen. It is a dairy farm with a herd of 480 Jersey cows and adjoining land of 325 ha. Now, there is one employee on the farm, herd manager Mark Bruun, and a new employee has just been taken on.

Ravninggård is a working place and a private home characterized by tidiness and orderliness. Everything is in its right place and kept in good order according to instructions. At the same time, investments have been made in a number of technical solutions that contribute to eliminate or ease the time consuming and physically heavy workloads. This gives more time for the well-defined main task: To take care of the animals.

The technical solutions comprise among other things two robotic barn cleaners, a feed pusher robot and six milking robots that have been modified with a self-made fixation mechanism.



Ravninggård is run by two generations: from left Søren and Hanne Sørensen and Bente and Ole Sørensen.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT PRIZE FOR AGRICULTURE

Every year the Danish Agricultural Advisory Service awards a Working Environment Prize to a farmer who makes special efforts to create and develop a good physical and mental working environment on his farm.

The winner of the Working Environment Prize for Agriculture solves the task professionally, seriously and creatively, demonstrates by his example new ways, and inspires his colleagues. Financial support by several sponsors has made this prize, a diploma and DKK 25,000, possible.

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The panel of judges consisted of:

Ole Carstensen, Consultant

Department of Occupational Medicine,
Region Southern Denmark

Jørgen I. Andersen, Specialist Consultant
for the working environment

Region Southern Denmark

Sven-Aage Steenholdt, Farm Owner
Vamdrup

Helle Birk Domino,

Manager, Occupational Health and Safety
SEGES P/S

WE MUST HAVE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF THE ANIMALS



” We like tidiness because it makes us feel comfortable, and work is more efficient when tidying has been done properly.

Ole Sørensen on the working environment at Ravninggård

The toy tractors are parked in straight lines at the sand pit in the yard. In the barn all the alleys are tidy, and in the milking robot room the floor is still shining after the latest cleaning operation.

Nothing has been left to chance on Ravninggård, and everything has its place. They are not prissy with cleaning and tidiness, but prefer it for the sake of safety and because they like it that way.

- It has always been important to us to have a safe working environment for our employees and us. We have four children, and it must be safe for them and their friends as well when they are here. Therefore, we are methodical people. We like tidiness because it makes us feel comfortable, and work is the more efficient when tidying has been done properly, says Ole Sørensen, who lives on the farm with his wife Bente. The couple run Ravninggård in partnership with Ole's parents, Søren and Hanne.

Søren and Hanne bought the farm back in 1973. At the time they had 38 dairy cows. Since then expansions and renovations have taken place several times until today, when they have 480 Jersey cows and cultivate 325 ha.

They have split up tasks so that Bente and Hanne are responsible for the calves in the large herd of Jersey cows. Ole is in charge of the day-to-day operations, and Søren's task is to mix the feed. He also deals with a substantial part of the fieldwork.

Physical working environment in top condition

From a purely technical point of view I/S Ravninggård has made a number of investments to improve the working environment. They have bought six milking robots where

a special bar has been fitted, invented by the people at Ravninggård themselves, to adapt the robots to Jersey cows. Otherwise the robots are somewhat outsized for Jersey cows. Two robotic barn cleaners automatically clean the barn floors, a feed pusher pushes the roughage towards the feeding fence when it is needed, and a bedding machine sees to it that the cows have ample bedding material at all times.

The ventilation curtains in the barn have been provided with a net so that employees or visitors will not get their hands and arms caught in the curtain roller. Besides, the family has decided to build wider and lower plan silos.

- The plan silos are slightly cheaper than the usual ones, and they have been built for safety measures. Therefore, the technical facilities have reduced the unmanageable and heavy work. We think that it is important to have a nice and exciting working place where one has time to observe and take care of the animals. In our opinion that is the most important task when we have animals on the farm, says Ole, who has also noticed that the employees appreciate good and safe physical frames.





WHO'S WATCHING WHO? There is about one hour's office work to do every day. However, this paperwork can be done in close proximity to the cows.



Broader and lower plan silos have been established for the sake of security. It turns out they are slightly more economical, too.



Six robots handle the milking of the 480 cows. Herd manager Mark Bruun appreciates the technical equipment at Ravinggård.

- > - We never have problems obtaining a little extra help from our staff because they are fully aware of the fact that they have a good working place. By and large, the owners of I/S Ravinggård take care of all the fieldwork themselves and with their own machines that are checked by the supplier once a year.
- It is an incredibly stupid thing to try to save money on the safety of the machines, say Søren and Ole.

A good discussion is important

In addition, the framework has been considered. Staff who might wish to use it have an apartment at their disposal on the farm. Even if the apartment is an integrated part of the farm, it offers good opportunities for having a private life.

Every day everyone takes part in the morning coffee and lunch. Currently, 22-year-old Mark Bruun is employed as the herd manager, and another young man called Jens has just been taken on.

The Sørensen family work with a will to create a good mental working environment. People are supposed to be able to discuss things on Ravinggård – and the tone is free, which is only possible when there is mutual respect and confidence.

- If we get caught in a discussion at lunch, we may sit and talk for a long while if time permits. We want the young people to feel free to speak their minds, so everything is being discussed from the day's work to weekend parties. And if they need to talk they are always welcome to see Ole or me. Then it is fine that I am here as well, for

some of the things are often easier to discuss with a woman, says Bente.

Joint excursions and free time to participate in Agromek or the Cattle Congress are fixed elements in cultivating staff care.

Not called to account

Mark Bruun has been employed as herd manager on Ravinggård since February 2010. He is very pleased with the physical frames of the job.

- We have a lot of technical facilities which means that there is not too much hard labour. The farm is always clean and tidy and everything is in its right place. So there is no need for running around with a shovel or a fork in your hand all the time. It's money for old rope when you have a mini loader, says Mark, who also appreciates the orderliness and not least the informal tone they use among themselves.

- I am not called to account by Ole. We can take the mickey out of each other in many ways and have good fun, working on a solution to the tasks in a good way at the same time.

And it is not only in the working hours that they take the mickey out of each other on Ravinggård.

- Every year we have a Christmas luncheon where we invite present and former staff. Usually it is very pleasant and comfortable. When harvest festivals are held in the neighbourhood, former staff sometimes ring us and ask if we would like to attend. We think that this is proof that our staff are happy and pleased with the way we do things, say Bente and Ole.

” We want the young people to feel free to speak their minds.

Bente Sørensen on the mental working environment at Ravinggård.



OPTIMUM SERVICE The feed pusher ensures constant access to feed for the cows. This saves both time and hard physical labour for the employees.
"We don't have to spend time shoveling and pushing and are free to do other, more pleasant, chores," siger herd manager Mark Bruun.

THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT PRIZE FOR AGRICULTURE 2011

This leaflet has been prepared by SEGES P/S

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