

'Cow toilets' in Netherlands aim to cut e-missions

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"A cow is never going to be completely clean but you can teach them to go to the toilet," said Henk Hanskamp, the "Cow Toilet" inventor

Teaching cows to use the toilet is not the easiest task, but a Dutch inventor is banking on a new bovine urinal to help cut emissions that

cause environmental damage.

Tests have started on a farm in the Netherlands on the device which collects some of the 15 to 20 litres of urine that the average cow produces a day.

That produces huge amounts of ammonia in a country like the Netherlands, which is the world's second biggest agricultural exporter after the United States.

"We are tackling the problem at the source," Henk Hanskamp, the Dutch inventor and businessman behind the "Cow Toilet", told AFP Friday.

"A cow is never going to be completely clean but you can teach them to go to the toilet."

The way the [toilet](#) works is "udderly" ingenious.

The urinal is in a box placed behind the cow, while in front is a feeding trough. Once the animal finishes eating a robot arm stimulates a nerve near the udders, which then makes it want to urinate.

The cow toilets are currently being tested on a farm near the eastern Dutch town of Doetinchem and seven of its 58 cows have already learned how to use them without the need for stimulation.

"The cows have got used to it," Hanskamp said. "They recognise the box, lift their tail, and pee."

"The stables have become cleaner and the ground is drier. Less damp ground is better for the health of the cows' hooves," Jan Velema, a vet who took part in the tests, was quoted as saying by De Volkskrant newspaper.

The Netherlands is already introducing stricter rules on emissions of ammonia, which can cause atmospheric pollution and irritate the eyes in humans.

The chemical can also be implicated in the creation of environmentally damaging [algae blooms](#) when it mixes with water.

Hanskamp, whose company develops agricultural machinery, says it could "reduce by at least half the amount of ammonia produced" were the cow to urinate on open ground.

The company aims to have them on the market by 2020, he said.

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