# Auto-drafting – a good place to start

Auto-drafting is an electronically-operated gate that automatically sorts cows via their Electronic Identification (EID). Cows are typically auto-drafted for mating, treatments, pregnancy testing or vet checks. In 2018, 38% of dairy farms in NSW were using auto-drafting.

Auto-drafting saves time and labour and contributes to a safety by reducing cow handling. Many farmers described it as fundamental – “you can’t get best value from other tech unless you can auto-draft cows”.

Farms in the TechKISS project shared tips about making auto-drafting work on their farms, particularly how to achieve smooth cow flow. These included:

* **When choosing a system, ensure the EID use in the herd can operate the gates (not all do).**
* **Design the race, gate and yards so cows move evenly.** Ensure the race has good forward visibility, is 2+ cow lengths at entry and exit, and is a width that won’t allow cows to pass. The receival yard should be able to hold about twice the number of cows to be drafted.
* **Ensure the gate is fast-acting (so cows can’t jam it) but not too noisy.** Have sufficient reserve air capacity but put the reserve tank far enough away to control noise. And use rubber to stop clanging.
* **Locate EID readers well before the cows reach the gate and where they can be cleaned regularly.**

See all their tips and traps in short videos and info sheets on the NSW Department of Primary Industries website (search for ‘dairy technologies’).

[240 words, one image]



*Auto-draft gate in a long race with good forward visibility.*