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www.cattlebreeders.org.uk

BCBC Committee

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Ben Harman
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Melissa Roberts
Anya Westland and
Karen Wonnacott

Date for your diary....

The 2021 British Cattle Breeders Conference will be held at its usual venue, The Telford Hotel & Golf Resort in Shropshire, on 25-27 January.

Message from the 2020 Chairman Clive Brown

It is a great honour to have been elected as Chairman of the British Cattle Breeders' Club for 2020 and I very much look forward to the year ahead. The recent British Cattle Conference in January was again highly successful, insightful and provided much for the Club to move forward with. Thank you and congratulations on a job well-done to outgoing Chairman, Laurence Loxam and his committee and welcome to the new committee members, Tim Gue, Alex Brown and Ben Harman, who have joined the team. Work is already underway for the coming year, to ensure the BCBC continues to provide integration of science, technology and breeding in beef and dairy production.

Support for BCBC is drawn from a solid spread of farmers, researchers, industry and students. This demonstrates a wide understanding that the organisation has evolved and shown longevity in remaining relevant. Continuing to evolve will be essential so it is wise to learn from the past but more important to focus on the future. As the Club's committee prepares for the forthcoming year's events, we will be fully aware of this whilst recognising that we must retain the essential link to breeding. As we look to a future that not only expects high levels of production efficiency, but one that demands producers respond to a wider agenda of issues such as climate change, health and animal welfare, there is prudent reason for us all to examine whether the genetics we use at a herd or breed level are likely to deliver what supply chains require.



In developing the programme for the 2021 Conference, we will look to secure speakers who will be thought-provoking, informative and challenging, while promoting our strengths and encouraging discussion. I strongly believe this is a great time to be involved with breeding and genetics. We face some challenges, but with the speed of genetic change the UK cannot afford to be left behind. Although it takes 10 years for the full effect of breeding decisions to be seen at herd

level, the way in which we make these decisions seems to change rapidly as new sciences emerge and develop. Making the most of the opportunities that these developments deliver, as well as keeping an eye on what consumers demand, will be critical if we are to maintain a viable livestock sector.

Farmers, researchers, students and the agricultural industry continue to support the BCBC engaging in lively discussions and embracing the opportunity to inform themselves of the latest developments in research, technology and best farming practices to enhance the future of UK cattle breeding and genetics. I would urge anyone with an interest in the UK cattle industry to join us – the annual Club fee is only £35 and offers discounts for our annual two-and-a-half day conference, access to the conference reports, talking slides, farm walks and a quarterly magazine – offering great value for money. I look forward to meeting and greeting you at our 2021 conference.

Clive Brown

BCBC Conference Review & Spring Newsletter 2020

Conference Preview and Autumn Newsletter 2019



The BCBC would like to extend grateful thanks to the 2020 main Conference sponsors:

AHDB; Waitrose Farming Partnership; VikingGenetics UK, Dairymaster UK and Lely



With grateful thanks to the following sponsors: ABP UK, Allflex, Bio Energy Ingredients/Glycal Forte, Breedr, British Limousin Cattle Society, Caisley Eartag Ltd, Dovecote Park, Egenes, ForFarmers, Hectare Agritech, Neogen Europe, NMR, Shepherd Publishing, SRUC, TB Advisory Service, Zoetis

Sponsorship

Our regular sponsors find that the Conference, which attracts some of the most influential and knowledgeable experts within the cattle industry, offers an ideal platform for sharing information about their activities. There are several options available for getting involved; please contact our secretary, for more information on the 2021 sponsorship opportunities.

British Cattle Breeders Club Conference 2020 – Presentations

If you were unable to attend our 2020 Conference in January, you can catch up on the presentations, courtesy of Dairymaster UK, sponsors of the 'Talking Slides' section of our website at www.cattlebreeders.org.uk Presentations are available from the last six conferences. Further information is available on our website and you can follow us on Facebook and Twitter @CattleBreeders



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Jude Capper

Going green – how do we communicate our industries environmental advantages?



Sophie Throup

Beef into the future: customer focus and a retail perspective

The Beef Day

Sustainability and profitable breeding were key themes highlighted during the beef day presentations

Jude Capper

Going green – how do we communicate our industries environmental advantages?

The UK livestock industry does pretty well with its carbon footprint compared with the rest of the world, but we do see huge variation within our systems, said Dr Jude Capper, concluding the line-up of speakers at the Beef Day. She explained that we have a huge opportunity to change and demonstrate to consumers the good work to be done.

This change can come about by improving our KPIs – feed efficiency, growth, fertility, longevity, maternal traits - which will then have a knock-on economic benefit. These KPIs work differently for different breeds on different systems/geography, but there is room for progress for all.

The livestock industry needs to have the consumers trust in what it does and what it produces. The way people receive information has now changed, with the days of the peer reviewed publications long gone and the vast majority of information available to the consumer now coming from people's phones. About 82% of 16 to 24 year olds access their news/information from blogs and through social media, where the balanced nature of information can be called into doubt. It is important we keep meat and dairy products in the diet of this age group by providing short, simple messages with a few key facts and highlight the long tradition of farming.

Sophie Throup

Beef into the future: customer focus and a retail perspective

Sophie Throup, Senior Agricultural Manager at Morrisons, gave a retail perspective on developments in the industry, covering what was important to the consumer and how this is affecting the industry. While food safety is the number one priority for UK consumers, supporting British farmers was number two. Animal welfare continues to rise up the consumer agenda, moving to number four in the list.

The environmental movement continues to gather pace across all ages of consumer, with the offering of meat-free meals growing and overall meat sales falling compared to their 2017 level. Sophie explained that 94% of households eat meat and fish on a weekly basis; so people are still eating meat on a regular basis, but just less of it. Sophie acknowledged that the nutritional density of meat is a key part of the debate.



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Roddy McLean

Supporting the Sector – The Challenges and Opportunities

Research shows that when it comes to food, consumers want 'trust, traceability and transparency', according to Roddy McLean, Director of Agriculture, NatWest, who opened the Beef Day at the BCBC Conference. Although farmers are trusted by consumers, Roddy stated that farmers currently aren't good at communicating their values and that taking part in activities such as Open Farm Sunday were key to helping showcase the best of British farming.

There are challenges facing farmers across the board, he stressed, and beef producers need to ensure that both their businesses and themselves, are 'future fit'. He stressed the importance of budgeting and benchmarking, and then making use of this information to guide business decision making. Roddy also recommended that businesses ring fence quality time for the management team – be that with key staff and/or family members – to meet regularly and discuss an agreed agenda, with minutes taken, in order to set a timeline for actions. He also suggested holding regular meetings with staff and making sure that business aims were effectively communicated to all employees.



Roddy McLean
Supporting the Sector –
The Challenges and
Opportunities

Dr John Crowley

How heavy is too heavy?

Dr John Crowley, from AbacusBio International Ltd, explained in his paper titled 'How heavy is too heavy?', that, for a typical UK beef farm, there is an optimum breeding female mature weight in the range of 680kg to 725kg for cows. This conclusion was drawn from research which modelled the beef production system in the UK; this model is dependent on a number of assumptions including the cost per unit of feed for heavy cows.

Dr Crowley's research team compared the cost of producing cows with a mature weight of 651kg compared to those with a mature weight of 751kg. The model found that although heavier cows can result in higher revenue, they can also have higher production costs. This is because heavier cows need a higher 'quality', more energy dense feed, which increases the marginal feed cost. Heavier cows can also have slightly reduced fertility and require more land than lighter cows, resulting in a reduced stocking rate with heavier cows. These factors all combine to result in heavier cows having an increased cost of production which needs to be balanced alongside their higher revenue.

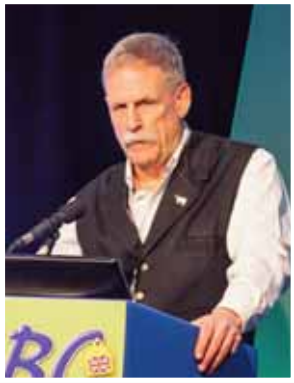
Considering this, Dr Crowley tells us the optimum breeding female mature weight is between 680-685kg, however this can increase to up to 725kg if no higher marginal feed costs are incurred. He also stressed that although it is important to focus on achieving optimum mature weight, this should not come at a cost to body condition score. Finally, he concluded that optimum mature weight is also heavily influenced by the penalties which are applied for over-weight progeny carcasses.



Dr John Crowley
How heavy is too heavy?



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Dr Bart Lardner
Developmental programming
and alternative heifer
development



Dr Michelle Judge
Breeding for superior beef
meat eating quality

Dr Bart Lardner

Developmental programming and alternative heifer development

What you feed your pregnant cows matters more than you think, said Dr Bart Lardner, who spoke about the impact of maternal nutrition during gestation on subsequent progeny. Dr Lardner, a Professor in the Department of Animal and Poultry Science at the University of Saskatchewan, explained that high fat diets over gestation resulted in heavier calves at birth and at finishing; suggesting this is possibly due to developmental programming. He also stressed the importance of knowing costs of production in any system and acting on this information.

Dr Lardner explained that his research centres around developing resilient replacement heifers for extensive grazing systems. They looked at how genotypes can be adapted to suit different environments. An example of this is exploring how dam nutrition can influence both the birth weight of calves and the finishing weight, as well as having an impact on heifer longevity. Dr Lardner explained that dams fed a high fat diet during pregnancy result in heavier calves both at birth and finishing. He also highlights the importance of ensuring your replacement program fits your type of operation, and that particular focus needs to be placed on reproduction and longevity.

Dr Michelle Judge

Breeding for superior beef meat eating quality

Have we reached a plateau in non-genetic improvements to meat eating quality and where will the next steps come? This was the question posed by Dr Michelle Judge, from Teagasc, Co Cork. Despite the extremely controlled conditions in abattoirs, large variabilities in meat quality persist and Dr Judge argued that genetics undoubtedly contribute to this variation.

Dr Judge went on to explain how meat is tested for tenderness, juiciness and flavour and that results show consumers preferred the meat from those sires classed as positive for eating quality.

Ireland, which is the fifth largest exporter of beef in the world, needs consistent quality for these export markets and it will launch meat quality EBVs for AI sires with the hope of identifying superior sires.

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Mike Powley

Building for the future, concrete and carbon

Suckler farmer Mike Powley, from Oak House Farm, Green Hammerton, Yorkshire, gave an update on the unique breeding programme at his farm and how he plans to make the farm sustainable for both animals and the soil.

Five years ago the decision was made to grow the business and Mike has concentrated on three key areas: infrastructure, genetics and soil. Previously, farm buildings were tired and too much time was taken moving feed and stock between various sites. A new unit has been built to provide the best accommodation for cattle, with a special focus on handling facilities.

When developing a unit that suits one man working with 150 cows, Mike is looking for docile, fertile, easy calving, long-living cows that will produce good quantities of high quality milk, as well as fast growing calves. He has been crossing his South Devons with Norwegian Reds to produce a great multiuse breed that fits his requirements well.

Another of Mike's aims has been to rebuild topsoil at the farm by running a no till, minimal disturbance system. The rotation of three years red clover, two years of wheat, followed by a cover crop, spring beans and two years of arable has worked very well, as proven by the soils ability to absorb water this very wet season.

Ben Harman

Repeatable quality beef

Ben Harman from Grove Farm, Chesham, Bucks, has developed a system of Chagyu (Charolais x Wagyu) beef that produces a repeatable, quality product that meets the needs of his customers. Farming on the urban fringe of London does have its drawbacks but also places him close to some very discerning customers.

The crossing of the two breeds brings the strengths of the Charolais breed (weight for age, quality, temperament and conformation) and the strengths of the Wagyu breed (docility, perception, marketing advantage and point of difference) into one product. Ben stressed that beef can't compete on price with chicken and pork, so needs to have the quality to differentiate the product.

Why not join BCBC?

Membership is just £35 per year and offers the following benefits:

- Discounted delegate fees at the annual 2.5 day British Cattle Conference
- Access to the last 60 years of conference papers
- The chance to participate in farm walks
- A copy of the magazine, Cattle Breeder, with topical articles and information
- A copy of the Digest (the proceedings of the BCC)



Mike Powley
Building for the future,
concrete and carbon



Ben Harman
Repeatable quality beef

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Werner Brand



Dr Scott Denholm
Deep Learning and its application in the livestock industry



Neil Eastham
Future-proofing your herds through the use of genomics

Dairy Day

Genetic applications and succession planning were key themes covered during the dairy day presentations

Werner Brand and Dr Scott Denholm

Deep Learning and its application in the livestock industry

Werner Brand, Geneticist/Programmer from SRUC, opened Dairy Day at the BCBC Conference by explaining how deep learning can be used as a way of solving complex genetic problems. He discussed a project that is looking at predicting the pregnancy status of dairy cows using mid-infrared (MIR) spectroscopy data, routinely collected during milk recording. He stressed that this is not currently an alternative to conventional pregnancy diagnosis. However, it does offer a non-invasive method to continually monitor the progress of pregnancy and can be done as part of routine milk recording.

Werner also highlighted the wider opportunity which deep learning offers the livestock sector. He notes that the technology has been available for over ten years but there has been limited uptake in agriculture. Although this is beginning to change, with several new projects exploring areas including: cow facial recognition, udder classification, and genomic evaluations. What all these projects have in common is the potential to automate repetitive on-farm tasks, meaning that in the future deep learning could have a positive impact on the use of labour on farms.

Deep learning provides a powerful tool, but Werner stresses its reliance on quality data. Ultimately this will be key to ensuring its successful use in the agricultural industry. He reminds farmers that collecting, recording, and storing good data is important, especially if they want to utilize deep learning technologies in the future. Although deep learning may have some way to go before it is common-place on farm, there is certainly potential for it play a role in agriculture in the future.

Werner's colleague, Dr Scott Denholm, also spoke about the application of deep learning in predicting the TB status of dairy cows using their MIR spectral profiles as part of routine milk recording. Further research is needed but results are very promising, with early diagnosis contributing to a reduced length of a TB breakdown.

Neil Eastham

Future-proofing your herds through the use of genomics

Vet and Nuffield Farming Scholar Neil Eastham spoke about the benefits of genomics and how they can help 'future proof' UK dairy herds. He stressed that farm specific breeding objectives, combined with selection criteria and breeding strategies, were crucial to maximise genetic gains and financial returns.

He explained that faster genetic gain can be realised with genomics and that the targeted use of the best young genomics bulls was a good tool. Female genomic data can be used to drive decision-making - who to breed from and who to put beef to. Animals can be ranked according to the selection criteria in line with the herd's breeding objectives and there must be scope to deselect the worst animals to realise a return on investment of genomic testing.

The use of sexed dairy and conventional beef semen, together with the sale of surplus low genetic merit heifers, is likely to yield the greatest results with genomics.



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Gavin Tait

InVitro embryo production for cattle breeders

Veterinary surgeon Gavin Tait, from AB Europe, spoke about the practicalities of InVitro Embryo Production (IVP) and gave some practical advice for farmers thinking of using it. He discussed the advantages of IVP, which include: reduced handling of the animal, quick collection, semen flexibility, a quicker turnaround and the potential to collect from pregnant animals up to 12 weeks into gestation.

Gavin spoke about the importance of donor management when looking at factors affecting IVP success. The eight weeks prior to collection have a huge effect on the health and viability of the embryo. Donor cows also need to be not too fat or too thin and on a rising plain of nutrition. He stressed that not all semen was good quality and that quality can vary hugely between different batches from the same bull.

Looking to the future Gavin says they are keen to encourage clients to collect from better donors where possible. An ovarian ultrasound screening can be used to select better donors as it gives a fair idea of how she will perform and whether she will be a good candidate for stimulation or weekly collections.



Gavin Tait

InVitro embryo production for cattle breeders

Rob Hitch

Delivering succession for farming businesses

Succession in a farming business needs to be about finding the key person or people that have the skills and desire to take the business forward, said Rob Hitch, Partner at Dodd & Co Accountants in Carlisle. Today's farmers need many skills to succeed and not everyone will have them. Succession planning shouldn't be driven by the issue of tax. It has to be taken into account but shouldn't be the driving force behind decisions.

It tends to be the younger generation that drives succession planning in a farming business. When younger members in the business meet a partner and have their own children and increase their responsibilities that the push comes for some type of succession plan.

It's important to be honest about how much money is being made in a business. Don't encourage someone to stay at home for 'beer and petrol money' if the business can't support them on a living wage long term, he said. Splitting the business from the assets can make succession easier.

When things are split, they don't need to be equal, but they do need to be fair, he added. Value can also depend on timing. Having value out of a business when someone is young and starting out can be more valuable than realising that asset later in life, he stressed.



Rob Hitch

Delivering succession for farming businesses



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Patrick Morris-Eyton
Improving sustainability
for the future

Patrick Morris-Eyton

Improving sustainability for the future

Dairy farmer Patrick Morris-Eyton farms in partnership with his parents and grandmother at Beckside Farm, milking 350 dairy cows (average yield 10,400 litres), with plans to increase the herd size to 400. The farm also includes a herd of 800 breeding ewes, a construction business and an 87 KW hydro-electric scheme.

He spoke about the recent expansion programme at the farm, which included the construction of a new 54-point rotary parlour and cow housing, and how he is future-proofing the business by improving the sustainability of the farm. Patrick stressed that key to this has been increased efficiency on farm to drive profit, reduce carbon emissions and a better work life balance for partners and staff.

Addressing succession on the farm when Patrick was 24 allowed a plan to be put in place and the farm to develop accordingly. He feels it is important for everyone in the farm business, including partners, family members and staff to know where they stand.

New Committee Members

The BCBC Committee welcomed three new members at January's AGM **Tim Gue** and co-opted members **Alex Brown** and **Ben Harman**.



Tim Gue

Tim Gue farms with his wife Marion and their three sons Keith, Matt and Ryan, who have recently joined the business. They farm 1450 acres with 450 high yielding Holsteins cows, 300 North Country Mules and 800 acres of arable cropping in West Sussex; and also have a 650 acre mainly arable farm in the Scottish Borders. He has served two terms (eight years) on the Holstein UK Board as a non-executive director for research and development, and 6 years as a board member of AHDB Dairy. Tim has had a significant role in the development of the modern dairy cow, the herd is currently number three on the AHDB Dairy list of highest PLI herds and contains over 120 cows Classified as Excellent.



Ben Harman

Ben Harman is a 4th generation farmer and third generation Charolais breeder, currently farming 274ha over three sites on top of the Chiltern Hills in Buckinghamshire. He currently has 50 cows, 111 head of mostly pedigree Charolais with some Charolais Wagyu cross cattle for his beef enterprise 'Chagyu'. The arable land is farmed under a share farming agreement with a local contractor. Ben farms with the help of his amazing 79 year old father and currently with help from his 18 year old son as he saves for University. Ben is currently Chairman of the British Charolais Society, which was founded by his Grandfather and others in 1962, and has enjoyed roles with Charolais and Charbray International.



Alex Brown

Alex Brown was introduced to the field of animal breeding whilst on placement with the Animal Health Trust in the summer of 2007, researching breed specific parentage verification panels for Exmoor ponies. Alex got her PhD from the University of Edinburgh in 2016, with her research focussing on the potential for across breed genomic evaluations in cattle. She then joined the dairy evaluations team at EGENES, being responsible for the monthly genomic evaluation runs for the dairy cattle industry. After 18 months, she took on the role of Beef Breeding Projects Manager at AHDB, focussing on providing technical advice and support for the UK beef breeding industry, and pushing to increase the uptake of EBVs in the sector.

Workshop Round-up

AHDB covered an interactive style of workshops for farmers looking to develop a breeding plan for both the beef and dairy sectors.

Planning Beef Breeding Strategies Workshop

Monday's beef workshop started with a back to basics talk on what estimated breeding values are, how they are calculated, and how to interpret them to help make breeding decisions on farm. The audience consisting not only of beef farmers, but students, researchers and industry representatives were very engaged, and some interesting questions and discussion followed.

The delegates were split into two groups with one being a practical session for farmers and students and the second for industry representatives.

The farmer breakout session started with a discussion on the factors that make a profitable beef enterprise, and in their groups they discussed 3 areas of a beef enterprise, the maternal environment, the post-weaning growth environment, and the slaughter/ market environment. Each group brainstormed what was necessary in each of these areas for a beef enterprise to be profitable, how these features could be measured, and whether there were EBVs available for farmers to improve these features through genetics. In many cases the answer was yes. The groups were then each given a farmer scenario detailing a particular farming enterprise where a new bull was required, along with a large number of bull EBV charts. Each group was asked to evaluate what the farmer needed to improve in each situation, and choose an appropriate bull for their system. After some vibrant discussion, all groups were able to make choices that they were happy with.

The industry attendees looked at the barriers to producers embracing developments within the area of genetic improvement on farm, particular in terms of breeding plans. Three groups considered

three separate scenarios and focussed on what was holding development back and what would encourage uptake. There was particular focus on what BCBC could do to have a positive impact on this and numerous ideas were floated. There was plenty of enthusiasm but only time will tell if BCBC is able to make a significant positive impact in this area.

Dairy Breeding Blocks Workshop

Delegates attended a condensed version of the AHDB Breeding Blocks workshop which had run during October and November 2019.

The workshop began with a discussion around who is responsible for making the breeding decisions on farms and who makes up the team when these decisions are made. The highest proportion of delegates either included their breeding consultant or made the decisions alone (23% each), with semen reps and vets involved less often (10% each).

The workshop then discussed data to use when making breeding decisions, this fell into three categories; on-farm recordings, bull genetic evaluations and herd genetics. The first topic highlighted the importance of keeping accurate on-farm records and using health records in addition to milk records to select females to breed, or not breed, replacements from.

Bull proofs available for selection were covered next; from the vast number of traits now with a genetic index (e.g. production, health and welfare and functionality traits), to how the UK economic indexes weights these traits to breed cows best suited to various farming systems (Profitable Lifetime Index (£PLI, for all year round calving herds), Spring Calving Index (£SCI, for spring-block calving herds) and Autumn Calving Index (£ACI, for autumn-block calving herds)).

In addition to the make-up of the indexes and the system they are appropriate for, the workshop also covered how to best use the information when selecting sires.



Delegates were shown how the filtering options on the AHDB bull lists and the new Breeding Trait Selector tool could assist this process.

Herd genetics were also discussed and AHDB's Herd Genetic Report and Inbreeding Checker were covered in detail. These tools are available to all fully milk recorded herds in the UK with NMR, CIS, Dale Farm and QMMS and outlines the herd's genetic strengths and weakness as well as allowing the user to delve down into individual cow and youngstock genetic evaluations.

A practical session followed, where delegates were given the opportunity to apply their learnings from the first part of the workshops.

The 'Top Tips' when buying semen, the Breeding Season Semen calculator, as well as what to consider when selecting beef sires were also highlighted during the afternoon. The workshop was wrapped up by discussing the upcoming base change and how this will affect proofs in April 2020. Further information on tools and resources covered within the Breeding Blocks campaign can be found at ahdb.org.uk/breedingblocks

As is the case for the whole conference, we strive to provide content which is of direct interest to beef and dairy farmers. We would therefore welcome your thoughts on themes that you would like to see covered at future workshops. To share your thoughts, please contact heidi.bradbury@cattlebreeders.org.uk

Winter Farm Walk to Oak House Farm, York



In November 2019, the British Cattle Breeders Club visited Oak House Farm at Green Hammerton near York, the newly built farmstead of the Powley family's beef herd and arable enterprise. The farmstead comprises of 130ha, with 50ha owned and 80ha rented from 5 different landlords. The arable enterprise covers 60ha with the remaining 70ha a selection of long-term leys, permanent pasture and higher-level stewardship that support the 90 head suckler herd.

Mike Powley has taken knowledge from Gabe Brown, a US cattle and sheep farmer, who is regenerating landscapes for a sustainable future and believes that improving soil health is a priority and practices no-tillage. At Oak House farm conservation tillage/no-till is used to establish crops and as a result, Mike has seen improved soil health with crops yielding approximately 10-15% more. The arable enterprise grows winter wheat, winter and spring barley, spring beans and red clover for silage in the rotation and 20ha of cover crops are grown each year.

Previous to the new farmstead the farm was split over three sites, the new

buildings have enabled Mike and his father, Tom, to house the herd on the same site. The buildings are animal focused, light airy and machine friendly enabling general animal husbandry to be performed with ease. The dedicated isolation/handling building has multiple adaptable pens which are also used during calving. The handling area comprises of a round tub with a curved race leading to the manual crush with electronic weigh bars and EID linked to a Gallagher weigh head.

The aim is to increase the suckler herd to around 120-130 cows. They are currently based around South Devon x Limousin home bred cows, with Norwegian Reds being trialled in place of the Limousin. Mike explained that the Norwegian Reds could bring greater fertility and managements traits such as feet, udders, smaller cow and mastitis resistance into the herd.

The heifers are calved at two years old, with the first Norwegian Reds calved this Spring, to easy calving Angus, heifers are then subsequently served to British Blue and some to Charolais. AI is used throughout, there is no stock bull on farm and EBV's are used when



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choosing sires. The Genus Breeder tag system is used to track cows for service, and an AI technician is used.

The herd is spring calving, over a nine-week period, the calves are weighed at birth. The calves are weaned at housing at the end of October/early November. The cows are rotational grazed throughout the summer on two-day paddocks. At housing everything is weighed. The cows are restrict fed silage and straw, with a reducing body condition score for easier calving, resulting in just 4 or 5 assisted calving's a year. Throughout the winter the calves are weighed every three weeks and growth rates are monitored and recorded. All bulls are fast finished over the winter and sold at 13-14 months old at 400-420kg compared to around 500kg previously. The heifers are finished on grass the following summer and sold at 20-21 months old.

An informative visit to a family farmstead who have

made changes to their breeding programme and utilised the information and technology available to them to produce a sustainable end product. Our grateful thanks to Genus Breeding for their support at the event.

Mike Powley was a speaker at January's conference, his full presentation can be viewed via the presentations link at www.cattlebreeders.org.uk



AHDB's recent update on the shout about the sire campaign

The Shout about the Sire campaign was launched by AHDB at the 2019 British Cattle Breeders Conference, with an aim to increase the number of known sires being recorded on cattle passports. The campaign has mainly been based on social media, with support from a number of industry stakeholders, and has successfully encouraged the conversation on the importance of sire recording in the cattle industry, allowing us all to unite in sharing one consistent message.

When the campaign was launched, sire recording data from the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) was available for the years 2010 to 2017, with 23% of sires being recorded on average across that time period. Having reviewed the data up to the end of 2019, AHDB is pleased to say that the percentage of sires recorded each year is increasing, with 30% of sires recorded for cattle born between 2012 and 2019. Accounting for the upwards trend in recording seen in year on year from BCMS, the Shout about the Sire campaign has been directly responsible for a 0.7% increase in recording during 2019.

Historically, the trend for sire recording across the calendar year shows a higher percentage of recording taking place in the first half of the year (covering the spring calving period), with lower levels tailing off in the second half of the year. In this part of the

year, the increase in recording as a direct result of the Shout about the Sire campaign increases to 1%.

These increases in recording will improve the data used in the National Beef Evaluations, which currently use commercial carcase data to estimate breeding values (EBVs) for carcase weight, fat, conformation, days to slaughter and average daily carcase gain. At the present time, approximately 30% of the data received by abattoirs is excluded from the evaluations due to sires not being recorded.

By working together to share the message through social media and industry stakeholders, the campaign will continue to have positive impact on the level of sire recording for UK

For more information visit <https://ahdb.org.uk/shout-about-the-sire>

Visit <https://ahdbbeef.egenes.co.uk/> to search the database for carcase EBVs from the AHDB National Beef Evaluations.

Having difficulty remembering who sired who? Order a copy of the AHDB Suckler Breeding Plan to put up in your office and keep track from <https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/suckler-breeding-plan-for-better-returns>

Want to get your company involved? To request a press pack, contact alex.brown@ahdb.org.uk

