

## DAIRY, VEGANS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

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We have had a great response from the industry to our Dairy 3.0 research white paper (available on our website), discussing the rise of veganism, climate conscience and its impact on the UK dairy sector. So how do we get ahead of the argument and demonstrate that dairying is part of the solution and not the problem? Kite's John Allen set out 'three ways to win the day' in a recent opinion piece for the Farmers Weekly and Ainsley Baker expands on these thoughts below:

#### 1. Continue to measure the carbon footprint of UK dairy and use the results to prove that we are markedly reducing carbon equivalent emissions:

Most retailer milk groups run an annual carbon footprint assessment of their dairy suppliers and these, combined with wider industry initiatives, demonstrate a significant reduction in the UK dairy's carbon footprint per litre over time. However, there remains a wide variation in results and a big gap between the best and worst performers. We can do much more to adopt these assessments across the industry, share best practice and really shout about the progress that the UK dairy industry is making.

#### 2. Become much more proactive in the way we engage with government and consumers about the positive work that is being done within UK dairying to:

##### Address climate change

Demonstrating that well managed UK dairy farming is part of the solution to climate change and feeding the population



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as opposed to being a cause of the problem.

### Improve environmental protection

Adoption of best practice to improve air quality, minimise ammonia emissions from dairy and zero tolerance to any bad practice that pollutes watercourses, degrades soils or other precious habitats.

### Enhance animal welfare

We have the knowledge, laser-like focus and stockmanship skills in our industry to eliminate common animal welfare problems in dairy such as lameness, mastitis and milk fever. There has been some fantastic progress made from numerous initiatives already. Granted this is not always straightforward with financial and labour challenges, but by working together we can accelerate the take-up of best practice



### 3. Be clear and coherent

As an industry we must ensure that positive lobbying is resourced so that a balanced view is embedded with policy makers, rather than the anti-animal agriculture view that comes across from many pressure groups.

We need to step up our efforts to promote meat and dairy in a mainstream way, demonstrating positive benefits and be more open and consumer focussed, not hiding because we feel under attack, but leading change, demonstrating what we do, being positive and challenging perceptions.

# EAT FARM NOW

By Will Evans [will@eatfarmnow.com](mailto:will@eatfarmnow.com)



**There were several reasons why, in March 2017, I decided to start producing and hosting a podcast called Rock & Roll Farming, where I talked to farmers and people involved in the agricultural industry about what they do. One of which was that I do not think we have been particularly good at telling our stories and communicating with the wider public, our customers, about the challenges we face as food producers and the changes that the industry has seen over the years.**

Farming is now an extremely modern, technical and efficient industry. However, the storybook image of simple Old McDonald types leaning on a gate and chewing on a piece of straw persists. Or worse still, the subsidy-guzzling barley barons of the 1970s, hoovering up money from the public purse for doing nothing more than owning land, or the picture that activists so often like to paint of a cruel and uncaring industry, exploiting animals for fun.

This has to change. We cannot be in a position where children and young people google questions about farming and negative and misleading information is what they are answered with. Not if we want a bright future for our industry.

We all have smart phones and it has never been easier to share pictures, videos and stories from our farms to potentially thousands on a daily basis. People have never

been as interested in where their food comes from and how it is produced as they are now, so it is up to us as an industry to show them the truth about what modern agriculture really involves. No one else will do it for us.

This is where eatfarmnow.com comes in. This is a project where we invite people involved in farming and food production who are already putting out videos, podcasts or blogs on various platforms to also share them to our site. We feel that by bringing these voices together so they are freely available in one place, it will not only help to collectively boost audience numbers, but it will magnify the voices involved and become an important resource for everyone from school children, to people who are interested in food and farming, to farmers themselves. We want content that is informative, serious, topical, light-hearted, funny. Everything and anything that reflects the everyday realities of this incredible industry that we are involved in. If you know of anyone putting out anything that fits the bill, please point me in their direction!  
[will@eatfarmnow.com](mailto:will@eatfarmnow.com)



# SLOWING DOWN MILK INTAKES



By Mike Bray [mike.bray@kiteconsulting.com](mailto:mike.bray@kiteconsulting.com)



**When it comes to getting the calves fed each day, it is inevitable that you will want to get the job done as quickly as possible. However, there is a growing body of research that suggests that calves gulping milk too quickly miss out nutritionally...but how fast is too fast?**

When a calf digests milk, it absorbs lactose in the abomasum via a curding process. If milk is taken in too quickly, adequate digestion cannot take place and undigested lactose (sugar) ends up in the intestine where it provides food for pathogens, increasing the risk of scours. This is why a calf kept on its mother will suckle slower and 'little and often', usually frothing at the mouth as it feeds, in order to produce the necessary saliva to aid effective milk digestion. To emulate this, research has shown that ideally calves should be taking a minimum of 4 minutes to consume each litre of milk, which means calves on four litres/feed should be taking a good 15 minutes to drink their milk.

Clearly there are practicalities to be considered when appraising your existing feeding system. For those using buckets and drinking, there is evidently no way to influence how fast milk is consumed. Those using portable feeders between pens can often retro-fit slower teats, but this of course can significantly impact the total time required to feed multiple pens. There is most certainly a case for considering a

bucket with the correct teat, a bottle or automatic calf feeding system, to ensure you are making the most of the milk powder you are feeding and getting the best growth rates possible.

Indeed, on farm, I have had a few instances recently where this small change has made a big difference. One client was feeding a good quality powder but growth rates were not as good as he had hoped and calves were scouring. We tried switching the teats to a much slower-flowing option and now have virtually eliminated the scours and calves are putting on up to 1 kg/day.

**"...I have had a few instances recently where this small change has made a big difference."**

As with all things, every farm is different and what is causing problems for one might not be an issue for another. Whatever your situation, be aware that the speed of feeding can be a cause of nutritional scours. Fast feeding could also mean calves are not receiving the full nutritional benefit of the milk replacer you have carefully chosen, and more importantly, paid for. Do have a discussion about this with your consultant.

## REARING TO GO



We were delighted to sponsor the “Rearing To Go” Conference & Charity Auction held at Halls Shrewsbury Auction Centre on Friday 13th September. The event aimed to raise mental health awareness in Agriculture and raised £8297 which will be split between three charities working in this area: DPJ Foundation, FCN and Cheshire Agricultural Chaplaincy.

## AWARDS NEWS



We are always keen to support young and next generation dairy farmers and celebrate their successes so we are delighted to be sponsoring the “Young Farmer of the Year” category at the 2020 **Cream Awards**. We look forward to shortlisting with the rest of the judging panel later in the year and hosting nominees at the awards dinner which takes place at Chesford Grange after DairyTech on 5th February 2020.

### NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST



In our own team, congratulations go to Jo Speed who is a finalist in the 2019 **Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust** ‘Steven and Gill Bullock Award’, an accolade which acknowledges the individual who has been most effective in using their scholarship to develop their business, innovate and contribute to the industry.

Finally, well done to Senior Consultant Becki Leach, who was one of the four finalists for the “Dairy Industry Woman of the Year”, announced at this year’s **Women in Dairy Conference**.



## KAIA HILLSMITH JOINS THE KITE TEAM

Kaia says:



*“I graduated from Nottingham University this year with a BSc in Agricultural Sciences. Not from a farming background, I have worked hard to gain practical farming experience alongside my studies both in the UK and New Zealand. I spent a year of my degree in industry, working for McDonald’s UK across their entire dairy supply chain from ‘farm to front counter’. This involved farm placements and office-based work with milk processors. Throughout my degree I have been employed by the Centre for Dairy Science Innovation at Nottingham University, predominantly rearing youngstock and participating in dairy research and data collection. One of my interests is farm data capture and how data can be used and analysed to benefit farm businesses and inform management decisions. I am excited to be taking this interest forward as I begin my journey with Kite as a member of the South West team.”*

## AgriScot

Your Farm Business Event

20 NOVEMBER 2019

For the third year running Kite Consulting and the Scottish Dairy Hub will be running a joint seminar at Agriscot, providing key speakers to give an insight and answer questions about the short and long-term outlook, opportunities and obstacles for Scottish dairy farmers.

The panel includes Kite Senior Consultant David Keiley alongside Mairi Gougeon MSP, Paul Flanagan (AHDB), ex-banker and now progressive dairy farmer Brendan Muldowney and Chris Walkland, independent dairy market analyst and journalist. The event will be chaired by Alec Ross of Biocell. The seminar gives dairy farmers an opportunity to ask questions directly to industry figures as well as empower them with market knowledge.

The event runs upstairs in the main entrance at Seminar Room 1 from 1pm-2pm and is free to attend; the audience is encouraged to stay behind until 2.30pm to have one-to-one discussions with the panel.

Please join the Kite team for a cream tea in the hospitality suite in the upper foyer of the Highland Hall between 2.30 and 3.30pm.

# DAIRY UPDATE PEOPLE MANAGEMENT



By Becki Leach and Jo Speed

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**The most crucial part of any farm is the people who operate it. Kite Consulting's Becki Leach and Jo Speed look at five key steps you can take to help recruit and retain the right people for your business...**

## Skills gap

Ideally (easier said than done), do not recruit in a panic! First, see if existing team members are willing to fill gaps or perhaps you can use relief milkers in the short term to give you some time. Work out the skill gaps in your business and how a new member of staff would fit into the existing team. What skills does an employee need to have when they start working for you and what can they be trained to do?

## Do not limit potential

Look beyond the traditional routes you have previously used to fill vacant positions. Do not just target agricultural networks but look to use Facebook and job sites that are not agriculture specific. You might have to filter quite a few applications, but we are increasingly seeing staff being recruited from outside agriculture to fill positions on dairy units. Do not dismiss those without previous livestock experience. The ability to follow protocols, manage a task list and be part of a team are all skills that most dairy farmers are looking for and transfer well from many other jobs.

## Recruitment is only the start

Once you have a new recruit, the process of developing that person into a valuable asset and retaining them as part of your business has only just begun. In addition to the basics such as a Contract of Employment, new staff members (even those who have worked on farms before) need a thorough induction,

training and ongoing reviews to manage their performance. Do not leave new staff members floundering and uncertain about what needs to be done, when and how.

## Basic conditions

You get to go into a warm house at lunchtime, have a warm meal (or at least a cup of tea), listen to the radio and dry off. Your staff will appreciate the same facilities and would certainly have them at other non-agricultural job opportunities. These things are important in making staff members feel valued and part of the business. As a minimum, staff need somewhere dry and warm where they can have lunch and a cuppa. Providing a microwave as well as the kettle means they can have warm lunches in winter. Make sure the toilet facilities are well maintained and cleaned (include as a job on the rota if need be) and have the basics such as a seat, toilet paper and hot running water in the sink.

## Be flexible

Employees are unlikely to be as emotionally invested in your business as you are. They may have other priorities outside work and may want to work less hours than you do, but this is not a personal failing on their part. Be firm, but flexible and fair about what hours/days you need them to work. For staff with families, make sure they get some time off during school holidays and over the festive period.

Jo and Becki can support you in developing and upskilling your team through the delivery of on-farm workshops and team meetings. We also support farming businesses with mentoring, personal and staff development, succession and conflict resolution.



**PROGRESSIVE  
DAIRY OPERATORS**

*"Revolution not Evolution"*

## REVOLUTION NOT EVOLUTION 2 & 3 MARCH 2020

The Kite Progressive Dairy Operators' conference takes place on **2 & 3 March 2020** at the Park Royal Hotel, Stretton, Warrington WA4 4NS. This year's title is *'Revolution not Evolution'* and the two-day event will bring together some of the brightest minds in the dairy industry to take a practical look at how to make the most of the opportunities ahead.

### Confirmed speakers include:

- **Ash Amirahmadi**, Arla Foods UK Managing Director
- **Mark Roach**, Managing Director Grosvenor Farms Ltd and Chairman Cogent Breeding.
- **Tom Crotty**, Director of INEOS, a leading chemical producer and significant player in the oil and gas market.

- **Jude Capper**, Livestock Sustainability Consultant.

Topics include 'Dairy 2030 - what it will look like', 'Consumers of the future', 'Framing your farming story' plus lots more. The workshop-style of the event will embrace new ideas and technologies, and puts the emphasis on discussion and development to help find the answers to

some of the industry's future challenges.

**For details of how to book, please visit our website or email enquiries@kiteconsulting.com**



# BEEF UPDATE

By Will Jackson - AHDB Strategy Director Beef and Lamb



We are seeing huge changes across agriculture and this is especially true in the red meat sector. If we leave aside any changes to basic payments, which will have a profound impact, we are seeing changes in eating habits, environmental concerns, low farmgate prices, Brexit, human health impact – I could keep going. We are in a rapidly changing environment, which is causing a lot of pressure on farm. In this article, I will dip into just a couple of these areas:

## Reputation

Beef has suffered recently, having been strongly linked to human health and environmental challenges. That said, as I write this, we have just seen a positive report – the first in a long time – suggesting “evidence” that meat can be bad for your health is flimsy at best and not robust enough for people to change eating habits. This has led to people asking more questions about what they are consuming and what impact it has. While we are currently only seeing a slight dip in demand for red meat, it is an area that we need to be aware of.

Within ADHB, the reputation of the industry is one of our key areas of focus and will be a key segment of our new strategy. We are currently working with QMS & HCC on a Meat and Health programme that speaks directly to consumers, as well as healthcare professionals. Beef is in a strong position with most UK households still buying into the category and it is vital we maintain this. Consumer expectations are constantly

evolving as the search for simple and convenient meal solutions continues, so we need to adapt to provide people with the quality of product and peace of mind they need.

## Exports

As well as the domestic market, exports are also a key area to the beef sector. With African Swine Fever sweeping across Asia at the moment, we are seeing a 10% gap between supply and demand in global animal protein. This offers some opportunity and, with the risk of imports increasing depending on the outcome of Brexit, accessing markets around the world is going to become more important. We are currently in the final stages of agreeing market access with China for beef, which is massive news for beef farmers and processors.

In the short term, we have seen a real dip in prices over the summer caused by difficult trading conditions, coupled with the weather meaning a lack of BBQ opportunities and the slight drop in demand I have already mentioned. We would expect prices to firm up as we move into autumn and cattle numbers begin to tighten.

Looking ahead, I believe that while we are seeing challenges at the moment, there are also huge opportunities out there. Not only are domestic customers still putting red meat in their basket, we are operating in a marketplace where the global consumption of beef is continuing to grow – watch this space.



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