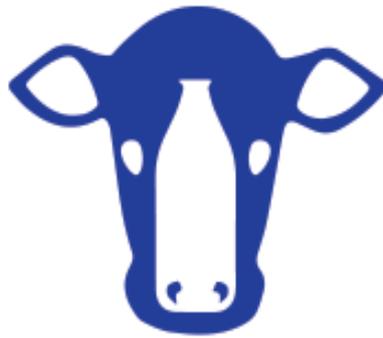


Kite

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**Progressive
Dairy Operators**
Chesford Grange
Sep 4 2025

Thursday 4 September 2025 - 9.30am - 3.30pm
Chesford Grange

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2025 Progressive Dairy Operators' Conference from the Kite Team, British Dairying and our sponsors.

It has been a year of hidden challenges and opportunities. Average rainfall stats belie the range, with dry spells forcing many to eat into winter forage stocks whilst others have enjoyed a bumper year. Farms have benefitted from unprecedentedly stable milk prices and moderate feed prices, with GB economic pressures being upstaged by European shortages.

In a profitable year, it raises questions around investment. Not the type of investment we need to make to stand still but the type of investment that drives you to achieve the next 10% in performance or business growth. What should a modern dairy business be looking to invest in to remain amongst the most efficient, profitable and environmentally responsible businesses in the sector as we look forward to the 2040s?

Today you'll hear speakers discuss the options for business growth and minimising risk along with the benefits that the newest technologies are providing to optimise and secure that next 10% of performance by converting data into actionable information. Our farmer speakers; Dave Stewart of Ferney Lees Farm and Steff Richards of Cwrt Malle will share their stories of how they grew their businesses while maintaining performance.

Please do use the breaks and lunch to network with your peers and we welcome your active involvement in the question sections and panel discussions.

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Progressive Dairy Operators
Chesford Grange
Sep 4 2025



Conference Programme

9:30 Registration		
10:00	Welcome	Steve West
10:15	Outlook for GB dairy	Becki Reay - Kite Consulting
Business Growth		
10:45	Strategies for successful business growth	David Keiley - Kite Consulting
11:15	From 80 to 800 cows and flipping the system - what worked and what needed to work!	Dave Stewart - Ferney Lees Farm, Cheshire
Business Panel Discussion		
11:45	Building a business to achieve the next 10%	Mel Shipley - Oxbury Dave Stewart - Ferney Lees Farm, Cheshire David Keiley - Kite Consulting
12:30 Lunch - River Room		
Technical		
13:30	Where does the future lie with data and technology in the dairy sector?	Caroline Hamilton - Intelligent Dairy Solutions
14:00	Strategic decisions for scaling a dairy business - 3,400 cows, 13,300 litres and counting	Steff Richards - Cwrt Malle, Carmarthen
Technical Panel Discussion		
14:30	Innovation, technology and data to deliver the next 10% productivity and performance	Steff Richards - Cwrt Malle, Carmarthen Stuart Bootham - Cogent Caroline Hamilton - Intelligent Dairy Solutions Matthew Butlin - Asterra
15:20	Closing comments	Steve West and Becky Hewlett
15:30 Close		

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Oxbury

Oxbury Bank was founded to provide the food and farming industries with the funding and support that they need. Enabled by our team of Relationship Managers who understand the unique challenges faced in both the agricultural and banking industries and have the expertise to discuss funding solutions with farmers face to face on farm. Oxbury additionally delivers competitive savings accounts to any individual or business that wants to help farmers and the wider market produce food, preserve the countryside and deliver a positive impact to the rural economy.



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Speaker Biographies



Steve West - Kite Consulting, Senior Consultant

Steve is an experienced facilitator within the dairy industry. His interests lie in Genetics and technical performance on farm. He only recently joined the Kite team but has taken on the role of Genetics Network lead along with several corporate projects working with processor groups nationally. Steve joined the dairy industry as a molecular biologist and worked with NMR to help further develop the disease diagnostic service. He later joined AHDB where he helped to manage industry campaigns, knowledge exchange programs and farmer discussion groups

<https://www.kiteconsulting.com/>



Becki Reay - Kite Consulting, Principal Consultant

Becki was awarded a first-class BSc (Hons) in Applied Animal Science in 2008. During her early career she worked in technical advisory, project management and relationship manager roles in the agricultural supply trade, for AHDB Dairy and within the beef supply chain for Dovecote Park; a processor fully integrated with Waitrose. Having joined the Kite business in 2019, Becki now leads the Kite Corporate team in the UK, managing several key accounts and leading on business development and is the producer of our weekly Kite podcast.

<https://www.kiteconsulting.com/>



Becky Hewlett - Kite Consulting, Consultant

Becky has spent several years working in ruminant nutrition and now works as a Technical Consultant covering the Southwest and Midlands. Her expertise lies in boosting efficiencies and overall output for farmers, with a key emphasis on feed efficiency, carbon footprint reduction, and elevating farm technical importance.

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Speaker Biographies



David Keiley - Kite Consulting, Principal Consultant

With over 30 years of hands-on experience in dairy consultancy, David Keiley has been a driving force behind farm and agribusiness success across Scotland and Northern England.

Since joining Kite nine years ago, David has worked closely with both farmers and corporate clients, helping them navigate complex challenges and unlock new opportunities for growth.

His expertise spans strategic business consultancy, farm expansion planning, technical innovation, and financial restructuring—delivering tailored solutions that make a measurable impact.

David's approach is rooted in practical insight, strategic thinking, and a deep understanding of the dairy industry's evolving landscape

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Dave Stewart – Ferney Lees Farm, Cheshire

Dave Stewart began his farming journey at the age of 16 alongside his father, Cosmo Stewart, who was then 38. Today, Dave and his wife Emma, own and manage a high-performing 780-cow, high-genetic Holstein herd at Ferney Lees in Cheshire. Together with his parents, Cosmo and Eileen, Dave has grown the business from just 80 cows through strategic planning, joint ventures, and share farming agreements.

At the heart of the business is a continuously evolving five-year plan, underpinned by clear communication across three generations and a loyal, valued team. Ferney Lees is proud to maintain a low staff turnover, reflecting its strong people-first culture.

The farm has transformed from a grazing-based system yielding 8,500 litres per cow to a fully housed operation, now achieving over 12,500 litres per cow annually through three-times-a-day milking. Dave credits this success to disciplined strategic focus, clearly defined non-negotiables, and a long-term commitment to resilience and sustainable growth.

Away from Ferney Lees, Dave and his wife Emma share a passion for Rugby Union, cricket, and travel. They recently returned from a trip of a lifetime to Australia, supporting the British and Irish Lions—an experience that combined their love of sport with exploring new cultures. During their six-week absence, their children and several staff members took up the mantle—and, in Dave's words, "made him redundant"—exceeding even their own expectations of what they could achieve. It was a proud moment that reflected the strength of the next generation and the culture of trust and empowerment within the team.

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Speaker Biographies



Mel Shipley - Senior Agricultural Relationship Manager, Oxbury Bank

Mel grew up on her family's sheep, arable and dairy support farm located on the Canterbury Plains in the South Island of New Zealand, and after attending Lincoln University, obtaining a B. Comm (Ag Mgmt) majoring in farm management and rural valuation, she joined the Bank of New Zealand (BNZ) as an Agribusiness Partner in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions, managing large customer portfolios with a specific focus in dairy and horticultural sectors.

In 2017, she made the decision to move to the UK with a plan to stay for two years. Mel secured a position as the National Agriculture Support Manager at HSBC UK, working closely with senior leadership in the agriculture and central teams before returning to relationship management in Cheshire. In 2021, Mel joined Oxbury Bank, where she is now Senior Agriculture Relationship Manager in the Northwest of England tasked with maintaining growth and managing customer relationships.

www.oxbury.com

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Caroline Hamilton - Intelligent Dairy Solutions, Account Manager

Caroline Hamilton combines practical farming knowledge with strong technical expertise in her role as Account Manager at Intelligent Dairy Solutions (IDS). Raised on a mixed livestock farm in Scotland, she studied Applied Animal Science at the University of Glasgow before starting her career in embryo technology. She then spent six years as a Ruminant Feed Advisor, working with farmers across the UK to improve herd performance, fertility, and feed efficiency.

Today, Caroline plays an integral role in the Dairy Data Partners (DDP) programme at IDS, where she helps farmers unlock insights through data integration and tailored reporting using the IDS Tracker system.

With specialisms in ruminant nutrition, dairy costings, and embryo production, Caroline is known for her practical, relationship-driven approach. She works closely with producers to turn complex data into clear, actionable strategies that improve productivity, sustainability, and long-term profitability.

Passionate about the future of dairy, Caroline is committed to supporting informed decision-making and helping farmers adopt technologies that drive meaningful, lasting progress.

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Speaker Biographies



Steff Richards - Cwrt Malle, Carmarthen

Steff Richards manages the Cwrt Malle business in South Wales alongside his parents, Howell and Sue, and partner, Lorna, milking 3,400 cows with 62 staff handling all operations in-house. His focus on technical proficiency and continuous improvement delivers strong performance: 13,500 litres average milk output (4% BF, 3.45% P), 32% pregnancy rate, 22-month average age at first calving, and 6% mastitis rate. Business growth is expected to continue with further investment in batch milking, genomics, waste management, and the construction of a gas-to-grid anaerobic digester. Adoption of technology has been a key driver of business optimisation, enabling the performance needed for continued expansion.



Stuart Boothman - Cogent UK, Managing Director

From growing up in rural Cumbria and starting work on a 30-cow dairy I have spent all my career working within the dairy industry. From managing herds and farms across the country I came to Cogent in 2003 and worked across all facets of the business, including three years managing our international sales, before becoming Managing Director in 2019.

It has been truly rewarding to lead a business that since being acquired by ST Genetics in 2017 has more than doubled in size and continues to grow at a phenomenal pace.

<https://cogentuk.com>



Matthew Butlin - Asterra, Head of AgTech

Before joining AB Agri October 2024 as Head of Agricultural Technology, Matthew completed a Honors Degree in Agriculture from Reading University and a Master's in International Agricultural and Food Marketing from Newcastle University.

Matthew has held technology leadership positions for fresh produce and ecommerce companies.

He is focused on adding value with technology through Ag Tech's own Technology Products and enhancing the AB Agri products, such as Feedlync, for both AB Agri and its customers making them impactful for farmers, processors, and agri-food businesses.

<https://www.abagri.com>

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