

SPRING 2025

# ALL THINGS DAIRY

YOUR AHDB DAIRY UPDATE

**Fuelling healthy choices****Using on-farm environmental  
data to safeguard the future  
of British agriculture**

## GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT shines on UK dairy

Landmark event to boost exports

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Produced for you by:

AHDB  
Middlemarch Business Park  
Siskin Parkway East  
Coventry  
CV3 4PE

**T** 024 7669 2051  
**E** [comms@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:comms@ahdb.org.uk)  
**W** [ahdb.org.uk](http://ahdb.org.uk)



If you no longer wish to receive this information, please email us at [comms@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:comms@ahdb.org.uk)

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# Regional ENGAGEMENT TEAM

**Our field-based Engagement team is your first point of contact for support and enquiries, providing you with direct access to technical expertise and guidance.**

Whether you need help or direction, or just want to stay informed about local events, reach out to your local engagement manager.

For contact details of our specialist teams, including market information, research and genetics, visit [ahdb.org.uk/meet-the-team-dairy](http://ahdb.org.uk/meet-the-team-dairy)

## Scotland

**Doreen Anderson**  
[doreen.anderson@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:doreen.anderson@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07901 116454

## Mid and South Wales

**Jamie McCoy**  
[jamie.mccoy@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:jamie.mccoy@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07823 790440

## North West and North Wales

**James Hague**  
[james.hague@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:james.hague@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07792 289386

## North

**Alan McFadzean**  
[alan.mcfadzean@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:alan.mcfadzean@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07818 723857

## East Midlands

Pending appointment

## West Midlands

**Kelly Seaton**  
[kelly.seaton@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:kelly.seaton@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07598 064317

## South East

**Emily Collins**  
[emily.collins@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:emily.collins@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07591 444338

## South West

**Thom Washbourne**  
[thom.washbourne@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:thom.washbourne@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07443 254093

## Devon and Cornwall

**Laura Awdry**  
[laura.awdry@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:laura.awdry@ahdb.org.uk)  
M: 07391 415018



# WELCOME

Paul Flanagan,  
Dairy Sector Director



**It's a pleasure to welcome you to this latest edition of All Things Dairy. Looking back, 2024 was undeniably a tough year for many dairy farmers, with unpredictable weather patterns and the strain of navigating ever-changing market dynamics. Yet, on the plus side, we saw higher farmgate milk prices at the back end of the year and stable domestic demand.**

In this issue, I'd like to welcome our new sector council members, who bring new perspectives to our work. At the same time, we say a huge thank you to those who are stepping down, for their contributions during their time with us. Their commitment and insights have helped shape the progress we've made.

This year, our efforts will remain centred on three critical areas: marketing, exports and the environment. A highlight last autumn was the UK Dairy Export Showcase, where we brought 40 international buyers here to visit farms and processors and meet 60 British dairy exporters. With additional funding secured from the UK Government, we're expanding our reach through new overseas agents, increased activities and more international events. This enhanced focus on exports is vital for opening up new markets and growing the proportion of dairy products that we sell overseas.

Our marketing campaigns, such as Let's Eat Balanced and Milk Every Moment, will also continue to promote the nutritional benefits and versatility of dairy. They remain central to driving consumer awareness and appreciation for dairy in everyday life.

On the environmental front, our pioneering baselining pilot is now underway, involving over 50 dairy farms. We've started gathering data to better understand farm-level carbon emissions, using advanced technologies such as LiDAR scanning, which measures the terrain, hedges and trees to estimate above-ground carbon stocks. The next phase will see us delve deeper into soil carbon levels and analysis, equipping farmers with actionable insights to support sustainable practices.

As we navigate the year ahead, I encourage you to work with us, whether by attending our events, reaching out to our farmer-facing team or sector council, or exploring the resources we provide.

Thank you for your continued support and I hope you find this edition of All Things Dairy both informative and inspiring. Let's keep working together to champion the excellence and sustainability of our sector.







# GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT shines on UK dairy

The UK dairy industry took centre stage in a landmark event last autumn aimed at boosting exports, as Lucy Randolph explains.



**With participation from more than 40 international buyers and 60 British and Northern Irish businesses, the UK Dairy Export Showcase – organised by the UK Government and delivered by AHDB – shone a spotlight on the exceptional quality of British dairy products to a global audience.**

Buyers from Asia, the Americas, the Middle East, Europe and North Africa visited the UK to explore our dairy industry, which includes cheese, butter, yogurt, cream, milk powders and infant formula. Over the course of a week, they experienced the high standards and sustainability practices underpinning the sector.

Farm and processor tours across Somerset, Gloucestershire, Shropshire and Lancashire gave delegates a first-hand view of the ‘farm-to-fork’ journey. These visits emphasised the

dedication to quality and innovation throughout the supply chain.

The event included an exclusive buyers’ dinner, complete with a British cheese demonstration and tasting and culminated in a Meet the Buyer session and gala reception in Hertfordshire. Over 400 business meetings took place, providing a valuable platform for UK exporters to establish new connections with international buyers.

The showcase was developed with input from industry through the Dairy Export Taskforce, and led by AHDB and the Department for Business and Trade (DBT), in collaboration with Defra, NFU and Dairy UK. This initiative forms part of a larger strategy to enhance the global competitiveness of UK dairy businesses.

Feedback from attendees highlighted the showcase’s success. Alan Jenkins of Somerdale remarked, “We, as an

industry, couldn’t have asked for a better opportunity to showcase the best of British.” Buyers echoed his sentiment, emphasising how the event deepened their understanding of UK dairy’s quality.

Simon Alexander of Lulu in Qatar described the experience as “amazing”, noting his company’s plans to bring British dairy to Middle Eastern supermarkets. Similarly, Simon Roberts of Central Food Retail shared that his company is already processing deals with UK suppliers – a testament to the showcase’s immediate impact.

Beyond the connections made, the event laid the groundwork for future opportunities. Plans are already underway for follow-up missions to strengthen ties with markets represented at the showcase, ensuring that these partnerships continue to flourish.





The Dairy Export Showcase complements a broader programme of trade missions and global events, from the USA to Asia and the Middle East, all aimed at expanding the reach of British dairy products.

As the industry looks ahead, its focus is clear: to support exporters, drive international growth and ensure consumers around the world enjoy world-class British dairy. This successful showcase exemplifies the power of collaboration and innovation in achieving those goals.

### Expanded team to drive UK dairy exports

To demonstrate our commitment to growing dairy exports, we have made several key appointments to strengthen our global presence.

#### Rachael Speed

Rachael has joined AHDB as senior international market development manager (Dairy). Formerly an NFU trade adviser, Rachael will work closely with exporters to elevate the profile of British dairy products and drive international growth.

We have also appointed three new in-market specialists, jointly funded by DBT, to support dairy export growth in key regions.

#### Karen Liao

Karen has been named vice president of market development (Dairy) in Asia. With experience in export sales and marketing at Daioni Organic, focusing on Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore, Karen will help exporters expand their reach in Asian markets.

#### Victor Willis

Victor, with over 25 years of dairy industry experience, is the new vice president of market development (Dairy) USA. He will support exporters in capitalising on the UK's second-largest dairy export market, which is poised for significant growth in cheese consumption.

#### Adil Khan

Adil has been appointed vice president of international trade (Dairy) Middle East. Having worked with the UK Government for 23 years, Adil will strengthen export opportunities in the region, including through events such as Gulfood in Dubai.

For further information, contact:

#### Lucy Randolph

Head of International Trade Development (Dairy)

[lucy.randolph@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:lucy.randolph@ahdb.org.uk)

# Fuelling **HEALTHY CHOICES**

**Our innovative marketing campaigns Let's Eat Balanced and Milk Every Moment are driving conversations around health, nutrition and the dedication of British farmers.**

**From energising young athletes with milk to highlighting the sustainable excellence of British meat and dairy, our initiatives are making a lasting impact on consumer choices and trust.**

## **Celebrating taste, nutrition and trust in British farming**

Our flagship Let's Eat Balanced campaign returned in January, spotlighting the taste, nutritional benefits and trust in British beef, lamb and dairy. It emphasises their role as natural sources of essential nutrients such as vitamin B12, which help reduce fatigue, and aligns with the Government's Eatwell Guide for a healthy, balanced diet.

In response to growing consumer interest in food origins, the campaign highlights environmentally friendlier farming practices, bridging the gap between farms and tables, while showcasing the dedication of British farmers. Research by AHDB and Blue

Marble revealed that 67% of consumers felt positive about British farming in 2024 – a six-year high.

Our autumn 2023 and new year 2024 campaigns reached 47 million adults, with 94 million social media impressions. The This & That advert resonated strongly, with 70% of viewers reporting that it empowered them with new insights on meat and dairy. Campaign materials, including Balanced Bites videos in collaboration with Tasty UK, target Gen Z audiences, inspiring them to create healthy dishes with British produce.

Consumers could see This & That adverts on television, streaming platforms including ITVX and Netflix, and social media, as well as in seven major retailers. Farmers like Silas Hedley-Lawrence extend the campaign's reach through short social media videos, sharing insights into sustainable farming practices.

## **Milk campaign builds momentum**

Our Milk Every Moment campaign has really come to life since it launched last July and is starting to make an impact on young students involved in sports.

Working with British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) we're highlighting the benefits of milk to young students involved in sports. We want to help them understand how milk can support their health and fitness goals.

The response so far has been fantastic. We have engaged 800,000 young people and students are now sharing their own stories about how milk fits with their active lifestyles.

By December, our digital reach had exceeded expectations, with over 5.2m impressions and 3.9m video views. A mix of fun and educational content that resonates with young people has worked best.

Events have given the campaign a huge boost. At the Short Course Swimming Championships in November, over 1,500 students joined in on the fun. Our new student activators were front and centre, connecting with fellow students and capturing incredible content.

The interim survey results have been equally encouraging. Among students, 88% reported drinking milk, with 75.9% citing taste as a top reason and 73% agreeing that milk provides a range of vitamins and minerals. In addition, over 90% agree that milk can form part of a healthy, balanced diet and over 75% already recognise the value that milk can have in supporting their sporting performance.

Looking ahead, there's so much more to come. We continue to have a presence at key competitions, such as cross-country, Big Wednesday finals and the flagship BUCS Super Rugby Milk Championships, which culminates at the iconic Rodney Parade in April.

We'll keep the momentum going with fresh content, engaging events and leveraging the incredible potential of our student activators. The journey continues and we can't wait to see how we'll inspire even more young people to #MilkEveryMoment.



**Find out more about our marketing work at [ahdb.org.uk/marketing](https://ahdb.org.uk/marketing)**



**BUCS | MILK EVERY MOMENT**



**2,024 Likes**

@bucssport Milk – the O.G. sports drink. Milk is rich in high-quality protein, which supports muscle growth. Enjoy as part of a healthy, balanced diet and lifestyle #MilkEveryMoment



# Empowering teachers and farmers to **INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION**

It's been a busy six months supporting farmers and teachers to help children learn more about food and farming, as Elsa Healey explains.



The year kicked off with a teacher conference in Sheffield that will help to enhance what's delivered in the classroom. We also launched new A-level resources and trained another group of farmers to deliver memorable on-farm school visits.

This work complements our ongoing work with Food – a fact of life and Countryside Classroom to offer resources for teachers to use in their lessons and materials for farmers to use when hosting events with children. With Open Farm Sunday coming up on 8 June, we encourage you to host an event and help connect the public with the important work you do.

## **Bridging the gap between education and agriculture**

We have collaborated with LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) to bring to life subject curriculums through a suite of secondary and A-level resources linking back to food production and farming.

Two versions of the resources have been created: one set to be used by A-level teachers to aid with curriculum links in schools, and the other for farmers engaging young people in hands-on learning experiences on farm visits.

The resources address the clear gap in educational resources that align agricultural content with curriculum specifications.

The project transforms AHDB's technical resources into teaching materials, effectively communicating agricultural practices and sector priorities. By focusing on these topics, the resources challenge perceptions of agriculture related to climate change and showcase the industry's proactive sustainability efforts.

The curriculum-linked materials aim to address misconceptions about agriculture and showcase its positive environmental impact, innovation and relevance to key societal challenges. This ensures that students gain a

more accurate and comprehensive understanding of agriculture's role in today's world.

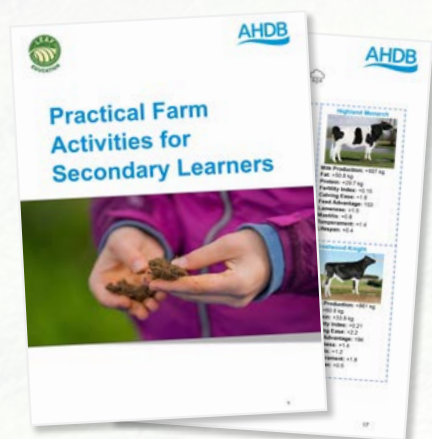
The development of these resources involved close collaboration with the expertise of AHDB sector teams and LEAF education specialists to ensure the resources meet educational standards and are classroom-ready.

## **Farmers gear up to host school visits**


Following a successful pilot last year, the next cohort of 24 farmers have taken their first steps towards creating engaging and educational farm visits for schools.

The School Farm Visit Support Programme is designed to give farmers the tools, knowledge and confidence to deliver impactful school visits. This enables more schoolchildren and young people to better understand and connect with where their food comes from through first-hand on-farm interactive experiences.

The programme is delivered by AHDB, in partnership with LEAF. It includes a fully funded CEVAS (Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme) training course and additional one-to-one support from an education specialist.







Over the autumn and spring, 24 farmers from the dairy, beef, lamb and pork sectors completed their initial training, either face-to-face or online, and are all set to deliver high-quality, safe and memorable on-farm experiences.

The training focused on essential topics, such as health and safety, integrating farm visits into the school curriculum and planning hands-on activities for children.

This training is a crucial part of a broader initiative to help farmers across England and Wales offer enriching farm experiences for students.

As the programme continues to grow, it is expected to have a lasting impact on both students and the farming community, fostering a stronger connection between agriculture, education and the next generation of food-conscious citizens.

Find out more about our commitment to education at [ahdb.org.uk/education](https://ahdb.org.uk/education) or explore the new A-level resources at [countrysideclassroom.org.uk](https://countrysideclassroom.org.uk)

For further information, contact:

**Elsa Healey**

Senior Education Manager

[elsa.healey@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:elsa.healey@ahdb.org.uk)





# Using on-farm environmental data to **SAFEGUARD THE FUTURE OF BRITISH AGRICULTURE**

Our baselining pilot project is underway, with on-farm measurements starting in early December 2024. With support from Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), it is an important first step in assessing the impact farming systems can have on the environment.



**We have selected 170 farms across three nations for the project, spanning dairy, beef, lamb, pork, cereals, and oilseeds. These farms operate on a variety of soil types and landscapes, reflecting the rich diversity of British farming.**

On-farm measurements with LiDAR (light detection and ranging) scanning began in December. This involves using a plane or drone to capture the height and structure of the terrain and features such as hedges and trees.

### What is LiDAR?

A LiDAR system is made up of a single laser with a receiver. It works by transmitting a beam of light towards the ground. This is then reflected off the ground or an object it hits and returned to the receiver. The receiver measures the time of travel of the pulse and converts it into a measurement of the travelling distance. This can be translated into high-resolution maps of the physical features and overground biomass.

This is being carried out at a resolution which has not been used at this scale within British agriculture before. The information will help build a robust and comprehensive data set. The picture these measurements create can then be used to estimate the amount of carbon stored above the ground, as well as identify where surface run-off will occur.

### Environmental impact of pilot farms

This year, we will embark on soil carbon and nutrient testing. This involves measuring soil organic carbon and soil bulk density at different levels down to 1 metre, if possible. Measurements can then be used to estimate the carbon stocks in the soil, as well as comparing with soil nutrients and pH.

Delivery of the first round of carbon audits and action plans will take place on the pilot farms over the summer. Once all measurements and audits have been carried out, each individual farm will have a wealth of data relevant to the environmental impact of their farm. This will help farmers identify what they are doing well, as well as areas for improvement.

The pilot is a five-year project and carbon audits will take place in years one, three and five to monitor how changes in management impact greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and carbon sequestration.

“Being part of this pilot will give us the best chance to baseline our farm and prove that what we are doing works.”

### Standardised environmental data for agriculture

Our long-term vision is to create a nationwide standardised data set that brings integrity to the industry and enables more accurate reporting of emissions and the environmental impact of agriculture.



### Meet the farmers

Our Cow Molly, based at Cliffe House Farm, near Sheffield, is one of the farms taking part in the pilot. Eddie and his brother Dan work alongside their parents and have a 100-cow milking herd of Holstein-Friesian crosses and Swedish Red crossed with Jersey. In 2007, they opened their farm to the public and introduced an ice cream parlour, giving them the opportunity to welcome people onto their farm and talk about what they do.

On the decision to join the pilot, Eddie says: “We want to have the knowledge to improve our farm and take our customers on the journey with us. Ultimately, they fund what we do by choosing our products, and engaging with our local community is a key part of our business. We would like to understand what our environmental data tells us about our farm now and what we need to do to make improvements.”

Another of the 170 is Old Hall Farm in South Norfolk – a mixed farm with dairy, beef, sheep, pigs and chickens. They also have a farm shop. “The issues surrounding farming and the environment are very nuanced, particularly when it comes to livestock production,” says Rebecca, who runs Old Hall Farm. “We know that our farming system is creating significant environmental benefits, but the only true way to know this is through collecting data. Being part of this pilot will give us the best chance to baseline our farm and prove that what we are doing works.”

Follow the pilot's progress at [ahdb.org.uk/baselining](http://ahdb.org.uk/baselining)

For further information, contact:

**Chris Gooderham**  
Environment Director  
[chris.gooderham@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:chris.gooderham@ahdb.org.uk)

# The role of AHDB's Dairy SECTOR COUNCIL

The Dairy Sector Council serves as your voice, ensuring that services and programmes reflect the real needs of farm businesses, as Lyndon Edwards explains.



The council are your voice and representatives at AHDB. We play a key role in helping guide the organisation, set five-year priorities and decide upon and shape its key areas of work and budgets.

## How the council operates

Composed primarily of dairy farming levy payers, the council's members are selected based on their skills and sector expertise through an open process. The council can include independent members to address specific skills gaps.

Appointments are confirmed by a vote among levy payers, emphasising a democratic approach to governance. Members serve three-year terms, with the possibility of one renewal, provided they receive majority support for a second term.

The council meets five times each year and, outside of this, will be involved in key projects and represent AHDB at industry events and meetings.

## Recent appointments

It's important that we have the right mix of skills and experience on the council to reflect different dairy farming systems, as well as good geographical representation across Great Britain.

In November, four new members joined the Dairy Sector Council, following a competitive selection and ratification process. Vacancies were advertised widely, and applicants were assessed on their skills and ability to represent different elements of the levy-paying supply chain.

I'd like to thank Peter Rees, Liz Haines, Joe Towers and Ian Harvey, who recently finished their terms on the council, for their contributions over the last few years. See the opposite page for an overview of the newly appointed members and their experience.

“Composed primarily of dairy farming levy payers, the council's members are selected based on their skills and sector expertise.”



### Anna Bowen

A fifth-generation dairy farmer, Anna operates a 300-cow spring block-calving system in Ceredigion, producing milk solids efficiently with a focus on grazed grass. She also works as a dairy consultant, supporting farmers with financial and strategic advice, and is an advocate for knowledge sharing through her involvement in dairy discussion groups.



### Andrew Rutter

Managing the Clayden Holsteins dairy herd, Andrew brings expertise in genetics to the council, focusing on breeding efficient, healthy and profitable cattle. With 18 years of experience at Genus, including as a sire analyst, he now farms in partnership with his family in Cheshire.



### Emma Furnival:

A co-manager of a 230-acre dairy farm and a youngstock-rearing unit, Emma combines her commercial acumen with hands-on farming. She has successfully applied these skills to the farm, optimising animal health, enhancing operational efficiencies and improving financial planning and people management. Emma also plays an active role in industry groups, supports farmers through Arla and contributes to education as a director for a multi-academy trust.



### Andy Warne:

With over 20 years as managing director of National Milk Records (NMR), Andy gained extensive experience of managing the complex needs of diverse customer groups, with farmers and milk buyers as customers, and vets, retailers and government agencies as data partners. His leadership experience equips him to address environmental and commercial challenges facing UK dairy.



## A collaborative future

Council members are always keen to hear from levy payers, whether that's at AHDB-led meetings or industry events. You can find their contact details on the website if you want to get in touch directly.

To find out more, visit [ahdb.org.uk/dairy-board](https://ahdb.org.uk/dairy-board)

For further information, contact:

**Lyndon Edwards**

Dairy Sector Council Chair

[lyndon.edwards@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:lyndon.edwards@ahdb.org.uk)



# Fertility improvement's UNEXPECTED SIDE-EFFECT

Ayrshire farmers Wallace and James Hendrie discovered increases in mastitis infections after reducing their calving block and needed to quickly address the issue before it impacted the progress they'd made improving fertility. Doreen Anderson explains what happened.



**After starting their journey as one of our Strategic Dairy Farms, Wallace and James' goal was to improve fertility. Management changes were made around heat detection, including more staff time, automated cow behaviour monitoring and screening cows for infection before the breeding season. To improve the conception rate, the brothers worked on dry-cow nutrition and milk fever prevention, as well as testing bulls and breeding plans and better record-keeping.**

As a result, cows in the herd calving within the first six weeks increased from 71% to more than 80%. Also, in the breeding season of 2024, the proportion of empty cows fell from 23% to 11.5%. However, this triggered an unforeseen increase in the rate of dry-period new mastitis infections, which averaged 25% of cows and heifers testing

>200,000 cells/ml at the first milk recording after calving – well above their target of less than 10%.

“When we joined the strategic programme, we knew we wanted to look into tightening up our calving block and improving our herd fertility. During this time, we didn't consider that this would increase the rate of mastitis infections in our herd,” said Wallace.

The improvement in fertility increased the pressure on their calving pens and staff, increasing the rate of mastitis infections. As part of the programme, they collaborated with vet James Breen from Map of Ag to better understand and lower their mastitis rate.

James visited the farm in March, observing the cows at calving and the milking cows to gather more information about current management.

He looked at:

- Dry-cow management in cubicles
- Calving yard management
- How the team managed the milking routine
- Milking-cow living space
- Ventilation
- Outside space
- Feed space

Finally, James used AHDB's Mastitis Pattern Analysis Tool (MPAT) to understand and analyse their milk-recording data. This highlighted that the pattern of infection was largely environmental, with a significant risk of infection occurring during the dry period when cows were housed in cubicles and on the loose yard calving pad. Environmental mastitis infections during





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the dry period will cause increases in cell count, as well as clinical mastitis cases within the first 30 days after calving.

### Areas for improvement

While factors relating to milking-cow management, such as parlour routines and machine function, are always important, James emphasised that the primary focus for this herd should be on implementing changes to dry-cow management ready for the 2025 calving season. A selective antibiotic dry-cow therapy approach for cows with cell counts above 200,000 cells/ml was implemented to cure existing infections of high-cell-count cows.

The key area identified for improvement was the calving yard, and the team at Millands discussed ideas for doubling the size of the bedded area by moving

their silage clamp and redesigning feed access. The group also discussed allowing outside living space off the yard, aiming for at least 3 sq m of additional space per cow. These measures will reduce environmental mastitis infections by reducing pressure during calving.

“Reviewing what we are already doing and having an honest conversation with James has helped us to pinpoint our current approach to mastitis control and what may be causing a spike in cell count,” Wallace said.

James highlights the importance of regular milk recordings to monitor new infections and understand the likely source of infection in your herd. At Millands, James points out that dry-period management in 2023 and 2024 appears to be the likely cause of the elevated cell counts. As a result,

continued monitoring of the dry-period new infection rate will be essential to understand the impact of the changes made to dry- and calving-cow management this winter.

Discover more about our  
Strategic Dairy Farms at  
[ahdb.org.uk/strategic-dairy-farms](https://ahdb.org.uk/strategic-dairy-farms)

For further information, contact:

**Doreen Anderson**

Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager  
[doreen.anderson@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:doreen.anderson@ahdb.org.uk)



# LEADING THE CHARGE in dairy herd performance

The Bailey family of Moorhouse Hall Farm in Cumbria is achieving excellent results in dairy herd genetics, positioning their youngstock just shy of the top 1% for £PLI (Profitable Lifetime Index). Alan McFadzean tells us more.



“We have cows that are so robust and productive, you wouldn’t even guess their age.”



**By prioritising genetic improvement and using genomic testing to identify high-performing cattle, the Baileys are enhancing their herd's potential, with tangible benefits in performance and longevity.**

Motivated by Nuffield Scholar Neil Easter, the Baileys – John, Kate and their son Chris, a full-time vet – set out to understand how he achieved success with high-£PLI Holstein youngstock. Neil, a practising vet in North Yorkshire, advises on breeding and genetics, significantly influencing his family farm. For the Baileys, £PLI has become a critical tool for shaping their breeding strategy, helping them steadily improve their herd over time.

“We genomically test our heifers because, on average, you’ve got 35% reliability on most traits. In comparison, you get between 55% and 70% using genomic data. The reliability is so much greater, and we always thought that you should use genomic testing because you move not only your own herd forward but you’re moving the national herd forward by allowing a proper comparison,” says John.

### Reducing guesswork and boosting efficiency

One of the biggest advantages of genomic testing is its ability to reduce guesswork. The Baileys use the data to confidently identify top-performing heifers for breeding and lower-ranking animals for beef semen.

“Before genomics, we’d find reasons to breed certain cows based on subjective judgements, but now the data gives us the confidence to cull the bottom 10–20% of the herd,” John shares. This methodical approach ensures the consistent improvement of herd quality.

### Linking genomics to lifetime performance

Over the years, John has seen a clear link between high-genomic-testing heifers and their lifetime milk production. “It’s not a perfect correlation, but there is a definite connection,” he notes. Unlike focusing on early lactation yields, Moorhouse Hall prioritises lifetime performance, emphasising the long-term value of genomics.

### Health traits and longevity as key indicators

For the Baileys, extending a cow’s lifespan means more than just keeping them in the herd longer – it’s about maintaining health and productivity throughout their lives. Genomic testing allows the family to pinpoint animals that will perform well without creating management challenges.

“We have cows that are so robust and productive, you wouldn’t even guess their age,” John says. Focusing on traits like lifespan, temperament and milking speed has further elevated herd performance and raised their £PLI scores.

The Baileys also recognise the interplay between genetics and environment. They strive to ensure that their management practices support high-genetic-merit cows in reaching their full potential. “While the yields we see are a testament to our herd’s genetic strength, a good environment plays a crucial role,” John explains.

### The future of genetics and sustainability

Looking ahead, the Baileys see big opportunities in advancing genetic progress to meet financial and environmental challenges. Traits related to feed efficiency, for example, will be crucial as the dairy industry works toward achieving net-zero emissions.

“It’s vital to show consumers that milk is a sustainable product,” John emphasises. “We need to get ahead of the game and demonstrate our commitment to sustainability.”

Genomic testing enables Moorhouse Hall to accelerate genetic progress by at least a generation, resulting in cumulative benefits over time. Although climbing £PLI league tables was never the primary goal, the farm has advanced from being comfortably in the top 20% to now sitting just outside the top 1%. This progress reflects their ongoing commitment to improvement and is evident in the performance of their daughters.

## MOORHOUSE HALL FARM FACTS

- Grass-based, multi-cut silage 130-acre farm
- 100 Holstein-Friesian cows, calving in blocks across the year
- 10,200 litres per cow, per year
- 4.17% butterfat and 3.36% protein

For further information, contact:

**Alan McFadzean**

Dairy Knowledge Exchange Manager

[alan.mcfadzean@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:alan.mcfadzean@ahdb.org.uk)



# KNOWLEDGE IS POWER: What's driving your farmgate price?

The price you receive for your milk is a vital benchmark for success and decision-making on your farm. Understanding its complexities and trends can make all the difference, explains Susie Stannard.



**Milk prices play a critical role in shaping your confidence as a farmer. When prices are high, you feel empowered to invest and increase milk production. But when prices fall, profit margins tighten or disappear, forcing you to focus on maximising efficiency just to stay afloat.**

Farmgate milk prices, however, are notoriously volatile. Over the past five years, UK farmgate prices have fluctuated dramatically, ranging from 26.7 ppl during the first COVID-19 lockdown in May 2020 to 51.6 ppl in December 2022, according to Defra. While input costs also rose significantly in 2022, they weren't the sole driver of milk price changes.

So how can you navigate this volatility and build an efficient and rewarding dairy business?

## **Key drivers of farmgate milk prices**

Your farmgate price is closely tied to the value of dairy commodities. However, individual prices can vary depending on your processor, contract type and the time of year. Choosing the right contract is essential. For example, high-producing Holsteins with low solids content align better with liquid contracts. While spring-calving herds with high solids are better suited for cheese or manufacturing contracts. The processors available to you will depend on your location and contract availability.

When focusing on average farmgate prices, commodity cycles are the main driver. Dairy products follow a classic commodity cycle: as milk supplies grow, more products are made, stocks rise and a surplus forms. This surplus leads to price drops, signalling you to reduce

production. As production decreases, stocks diminish, creating a shortage that drives prices up again. This cycle typically occurs every two years.

## **The impact of global markets**

The UK dairy market doesn't operate in isolation. Global trade – especially with the EU – heavily influences your prices. Milk surpluses or shortages worldwide directly impact the British market.

Demand is another crucial factor. For instance, Chinese demand for imported dairy products surged until 2022, when the Government prioritised self-sufficiency. Coupled with economic challenges post-COVID and a declining birth rate, Chinese demand dropped significantly, particularly for milk powders, which have seen weak price growth over the past two years.





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Fortunately, growing demand in regions including South East Asia and the Middle East is helping offset these losses, highlighting the complex and interconnected nature of global dairy markets.

### Key drivers of farmgate milk prices

- **Dairy commodity prices:** Average farmgate prices are influenced by commodity cycles. Surplus milk production lowers prices, while reduced production causes shortages and price increases
- **Processor contracts:** Selecting the right contract based on your herd type and processor availability is essential for maximising returns
- **Global trade:** International trade dynamics, particularly with the EU, play a significant role in shaping UK milk prices

- **Demand trends:** Changes in consumer demand, such as China's shift towards self-sufficiency, affect global dairy prices. Emerging markets in SouthEast Asia and the Middle East are mitigating some demand losses

### Supporting better decisions with market insights

Our Economics and Analysis team provides market information to enhance transparency and help you make better decisions. Understanding milk price trends is essential for running a successful business. We collect and analyse data on supply and demand, tracking national and global milk production, issuing quarterly forecasts, estimating wholesale commodity prices, mapping trade flows and examining consumer demand trends. This comprehensive market intelligence is accessible via our website and weekly newsletter, Dairy Market Weekly.

### Navigating volatility

The drivers of farmgate milk price movements are varied and complex. By providing comprehensive market data and analysis, we can help you make informed decisions to better manage price volatility and build a resilient business.

For more insights, visit our website or subscribe to Dairy Market Weekly for the latest updates.

For further information, contact:

**Susie Stannard**

Lead Analyst

[susie.stannard@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:susie.stannard@ahdb.org.uk)

# DRIVING PROGRESS in Johne's disease control

Since its inception in 2015, the National Johne's Management Plan (NJMP) has achieved significant progress in controlling Johne's disease (JD) within the British dairy sector, as Dr Miranda Poulson and Dr Emma Taylor-Holt of PAN Livestock Services explain.



Over this period, the individual milk ELISA median herd average test value (ATV) declined from 9.7 to 5.7 and within-herd prevalence reduced from 5.5% to 1.9% in herds testing on a quarterly basis. This progress underscores the commitment of farmers, veterinarians and processors to improving disease control and herd health.

The NJMP framework requires British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) Johne's certified veterinary advisers and farmers to conduct a risk assessment to determine the herd risk, examine the herd JD status and formulate a management plan within which farmers commit to one of six management strategies.

## Ongoing challenges

Despite progress, disparities between herds highlight ongoing challenges. When herds are ranked by ATV, the 'best' 25% of herds have an overall ATV of 3.44 and contain, on average, 1.5 test-positive and 1.0 chronically infected (J5) cows in each herd (based on a herd size of 227 cows). The 'worst' 25% of herds have an overall ATV of 8.68 and contain, on average, 11.4 test-positive and 8.8 J5 cows per herd. Herds with a high JD prevalence often have resource constraints and could work more effectively with wider organisations to maintain progress and reduce the prevalence of JD at farm and national level.

JD's wide-ranging impacts – on animal welfare, sustainability and economic performance – reinforce the urgency of continued control. The disease is associated with other





diseases, such as mastitis and lameness, and incurs significant economic costs. Affected cows lose an average of £113 annually, including £61 through milk yield losses. High-prevalence herds face ongoing management costs exceeding 1–2p per litre of milk, straining profitability. Additionally, *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies paratuberculosis (MAP), the bacterium linked to JD, is debated as a potential contributor to Crohn's disease in humans. While this link is unproven and MAP is not classified as a food safety hazard, the possibility highlights the need for proactive industry action to protect consumer trust.

Healthier herds also align with sustainability goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions per unit of production and enhancing efficiency and profitability. Demonstrating commitment to animal welfare and responsible practices bolsters the sector's social licence to operate and strengthens its reputation globally.

### Looking ahead: Phase III of the NJMP

Phase III of the NJMP will launch on 31 March 2025 and aims to build on previous successes of Phase II (know your status, know your risks and create a management plan), alongside new developments and requirements. The British dairy industry will be challenged to achieve a Johne's Control Index (JCI) of 5.5 by 2030. Calculated as the annual average of herds' ATVs, the JCI will serve as a benchmark for farmers to compare performance and track progress. While aspirational, this standard aims to unify efforts across the sector and encourage widespread engagement.

BCVA accredited Johne's advisers (BAJVAs) will be required to record herds' current and previous annual ATVs and provide up to three SMART recommendations within the NJMP Annual Declaration Form. Participating herds can assess their ATV through a whole-herd individual milk ELISA test or random 60-cow sample (30-cow screens will not be accepted).

Phase III also emphasises renewed efforts to engage farmers who have yet to fully participate in the NJMP. Social science research highlights barriers such as resource limitations, expectation management and inconsistent vet-farmer relationships. BAJVAs will require re-accreditation, which will focus on addressing these challenges and improving farmer engagement.

By building on past achievements and addressing current challenges, Phase III aims to solidify the British dairy industry's reputation and enhance its economic and environmental sustainability. Further detailed information on the launch and implementation of Phase III will be issued by the scheme shortly.

To find out more about the National Johne's Management Plan visit [actionjohnesuk.org](https://actionjohnesuk.org)

For further information, contact:

**Miranda Poulson**

Animal Health & Welfare Scientist

[miranda.poulson@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:miranda.poulson@ahdb.org.uk)





# BUILDING STRONGER HERDS with every generation

AHDB's genetic evaluations form the backbone of dairy farmers' breeding strategies, serving as a trusted tool for producers across the UK. Marco Winters tells us more about what's involved.



## Genetic evaluations

**While these evaluations may appear routine, the intricate process behind their creation ensures their accuracy, reliability and relevance. This ongoing work involves ever-growing computing power – linked to international systems – and a network of people and processes.**

These culminate in the proof runs which take place three times a year in April, August and December, as well as weekly genomic updates. These evaluations begin roughly two months before a scheduled proof run, where a team at AHDB collaborates closely with our partners at EGENES-SRUC.

The process starts with data collection from milk-recording organisations and is merged into a unique national data set which we check and validate before evaluations start. This data set, which covers a combined pedigree of over 15 million animals, undergoes rigorous checking and validation to ensure its accuracy before the evaluation begins.

From there, the UK evaluations are then submitted to INTERBULL, the organisation responsible for international validation. Here, they are integrated with results from other countries to produce a comprehensive global picture of the genetic performance of dairy bulls. Once INTERBULL completes this stage, the data returns to the UK team for the next phase of work.

We finalise updated genomic evaluations for all genotyped animals. Progeny proofs for older animals are also refreshed, keeping every generation's data relevant and actionable. At this stage, the system's computational

power truly shines, running tirelessly – even overnight and on weekends – to process the most accurate and timely data for farmers.

This extensive effort supports farmers in making informed breeding decisions and empowers AI companies to update bull catalogues with independent, unbiased genetic data. Genomic indexes that farmers purchase through commercial suppliers are also calculated through this system, ensuring consistency and absolute trustworthiness.

Through this robust, collaborative approach, we continue to make a profound contribution to UK agriculture. By helping farmers breed cows with better genetics for production, health, fertility and longevity, we're fostering herds that are not only fitter and more productive but also equipped to reduce their carbon footprint.

## Optimising herd genetics with our Strategic Dairy Farms

Farmers across Great Britain approach herd genetics with diverse goals and strategies, reflecting the unique priorities of their operations. Through our Strategic Dairy Farm Programme, six farmers are working with our Genetics team to better understand and enhance their herds' genetic potential.

By using the Herd Genetics Report Tool and engaging in one-to-one meetings with the farmers, we're providing tailored support to help each farm achieve its specific breeding objectives. This collaborative effort will help the farmers make more informed breeding decisions and achieve their breeding goals.

The participating farms represent a broad spectrum of genetic management approaches. Some are already using data to guide their decisions, while others are less familiar with genetic tools and prioritise less objective data over key metrics such as £PLI (Profitable Lifetime Index). This diversity provides farmer-to-farmer learning for the cohort and anyone engaging in the programme.

Over the next three years, this project will provide valuable insights and case studies, enabling us to share best practices and inspire other farmers to take actionable steps towards improving herd genetics.

## UNLOCK YOUR HERD'S GENETIC POTENTIAL

Whether you're new to genetics or a seasoned pro, our Genetics Workbook will help you make better breeding decisions. This resource provides clear guidance and practical theory to unlock the hidden potential in your herd.

If you would like to start working on your genetics, download the workbook or explore the Herd Genetics Report Tool online: [ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library](https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library)

For further information, contact:

**Marco Winters**

Head of Animal Genetics

[marco.winters@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:marco.winters@ahdb.org.uk)







# NEWS & UPDATES

## STAY CONNECTED WITH AHDB

To keep your farm business thriving, it's important to stay informed about the latest resources and support available from AHDB. Here's how you can stay up to date.

### Website

Our website is your go-to resource for the latest news, research, guidance and market information. Make it your first stop for everything you need to know. Visit: [ahdb.org.uk](https://ahdb.org.uk)

### Emails

With our new Preference Centre, you can easily update your contact details and choose the types of communications you want to receive. Stay informed on news, events, webinars, market insights, disease alerts and more. Visit: [preferencecentre.ahdb.org.uk](https://preferencecentre.ahdb.org.uk)



### Social media

For real-time updates delivered directly to your news feed, be sure to follow us on social media:

 @AHDB\_Dairy

 AHDB Dairy

 ahdb\_dairy

 @AHDBDairy

### Events and shows

Join us at meetings across Great Britain hosted by our Engagement team, where you can learn about a variety of topics. We also exhibit at popular dairy shows throughout the year, offering you the opportunity to connect with our team in person. See what's happening near you: [ahdb.org.uk/events](https://ahdb.org.uk/events)

## HELP US TELL FARMING'S STORY

We are looking for dairy farmers to share their stories as part of the campaign to reassure consumers about Britain's world-class production standards.

Our Let's Eat Balanced campaign shines a spotlight on the positive food choices consumers can make, protecting long-term attitudes towards British red meat and dairy as part of a healthy and environmentally friendlier diet.

While farmers have already been helping to tell the story about British farming on social media, we would love to feature more of you.

### How to get involved

Apply to feature in our marketing activity and showcase the care and attention you take when running your farm and raising livestock.

There are several ways to feature in our campaigns, including:

- Working with us to create content that shares your farm's story (we'll need to visit your farm and you'll need to be comfortable with us filming you)
- Filming videos yourself that we can then edit
- Sharing photographs of yourself on farm to be featured in activities such as our Meet the Farmer and Future of Farming series



### What's in it for you?

- Work with a great, professional team to produce quality content about your farm. We aim to make the process as seamless as possible, working around your busy schedule; all we need is your story and we will take it from there
- Raise the profile of your farm and the amazing work you do – a recent farmer story was seen by over half a million people on social media
- You'll be playing a key part in our marketing campaigns to promote British red meat and dairy and protect the reputation of the industry

If you'd like to get involved or find out more about what you'd need to do, email [letseatbalanced@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:letseatbalanced@ahdb.org.uk)

Please follow, like and share our posts on Facebook and Instagram to help spread the word.

[facebook.com/LetsEatBalanced](https://facebook.com/LetsEatBalanced)

[instagram.com/letseatbalanced](https://instagram.com/letseatbalanced)