

# All things DAIRY

YOUR AHDB DAIRY UPDATE

AHDB



Summer 2020



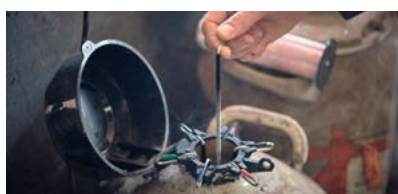
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Paul Flanagan,  
Sector Strategy Director, AHDB Dairy

## Welcome to our summer update

As you know, there has been lots going on in the dairy sector over the last few months, but I want to touch on three areas.

Firstly, the dairy industry was hit particularly hard by the closure of the foodservice sector. In the couple of weeks after lockdown started, we saw some cuts to farmgate prices, deferred payments and some farmers having to dump milk. This happened in the run-up to the spring flush so we faced the real risk that we simply would not have the capacity to process all the milk coming off farm.

From the end of March until early May we had almost daily calls with Defra, the Welsh Government and the Scottish Government on the supply and demand position. Our Market Intelligence team provided them with weekly updates on retail sales; milk volumes off farm, number of farmers impacted by the closure of foodservice and the direct financial impact.

Each of the Governments praised the pivotal role played by AHDB in collecting evidence during that time, and we have continued that close working relationship with governments, farming unions and Dairy UK.

Secondly, we looked at how we could drive demand for milk and dairy through a new consumer campaign. We identified £200K from our budget and approached Dairy UK who secured £300K from their members. We spoke with governments and they agreed to give us £500K – the first time all four UK Governments have contributed to a promotional campaign. As I write this in mid-June, the results the first month of the campaign are fantastic as you can see on the opposite page.

Finally, lockdown made it impossible to run our programme of Strategic Farm meetings. Instead, our Knowledge Exchange team has delivered online events and even launched some new farms. Instead of 30–50 farmers that we would normally see on farm, over 100 watched live, with even more catching up after each event on YouTube afterwards. If you have not yet caught up with these online meetings, you can access at [ahdb.org.uk/dairy-events-archive](https://ahdb.org.uk/dairy-events-archive)



## How lockdown has influenced the consumer landscape

**The consumer landscape has changed dramatically since the introduction of the UK lockdown.**

Grocery habits have reshaped as we adapt to life under lockdown. Where we shop and what we buy have changed, with a rise in home baking helping stimulate demand for dairy products.

Kantar estimates an increase of 190 million occasions per week of milk, largely driven by more teas, coffees and cereal being consumed in the home. The tendency to have a 'cuppa', with the estimated rising in 'snacking' is likely to sit well with liquid milk consumption as it looks to balance with liquid milk, which may have gone into foodservice.

For cheese, 71% of the estimated rise of 52 million occasions were consumed over lunch each week. A similar pattern follows for yogurts, with just under half coming at lunchtime. Kantar estimates that butter occasions will rise by 34 million per week, with 67% of these taking place during the middle of the day.

During lockdown, one thing has become clear – there is more positivity towards dairy. Many people have moved back to products they know and love to build nourishing meals.

There is also a significant reduction in the number of people claiming to be cutting back on dairy in the period post-lockdown, which has decreased from 17% to 11%. Those admitting to consuming more dairy has increased from 5% to 12%.

With all these different dynamics at play, it is critical that the retail sector adapts to changing consumer needs, particularly as lockdown eases, and households reassess their behaviours in and out of the home.

Keep up to date with the latest on consumer trends at  
[ahdb.org.uk/retail-and-consumer-insight](https://ahdb.org.uk/retail-and-consumer-insight)



# Milk Your Moments

**Our jointly funded industry dairy marketing campaign 'Milk Your Moments' has been working hard to promote dairy products over the last three months.**

The campaign was formed when cafes, restaurants and pubs closed at short notice due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The 12-week, £1 million campaign was joint-funded by AHDB, Dairy UK, Defra, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

While thinking about how best to support the industry during this difficult time, we recognised we needed to give back to consumers too, since dairy has always been central to their connections with others.

Milk and dairy have always featured in situations we took for granted before the lockdown, such as catching up with a colleague over a coffee or sharing an ice cream with friends, so the campaign celebrates those moments – hence 'Milk Your Moments'.

We teamed up with mental health charity Mind to highlight the importance of human connections and open conversations with others to make a positive impact on people's mental health.

It featured on social media, geo-targeted adverts and billboards when people were close to supermarkets, in-store promotion and, for the first time in over 20 years, a television advert.

We encouraged consumers to record their own moments to share with their friends on social media using the #MilkYourMoments hashtag.

Consumers were prompted to visit the Milk Your Moments website, which generated a random 'moment of inspiration' and donated £1 to Mind as well as give them an opportunity to win a prize.

We're still finalising total donations, but we anticipate we'll have raised over £100,000 for Mind, which will make a big

## Campaign results\*

- Seen by 29.5 million people in the national press
- 33 million across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
- 2.6 million geo-targeted social media adverts

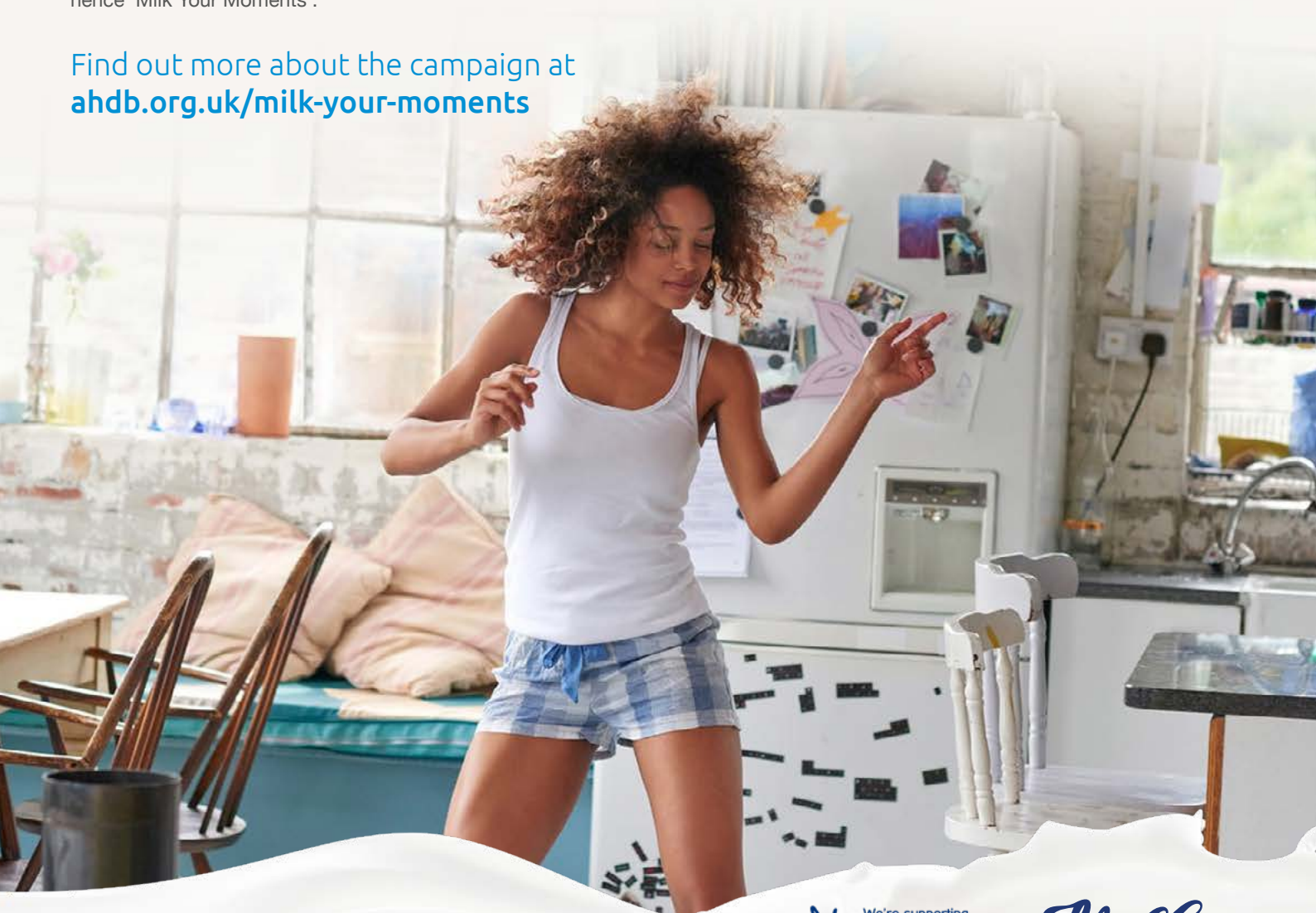
\* Campaign results at 18 June

difference to supporting people's mental health during the lockdown.

Farmers helped by sharing the campaign on their own social media accounts and donating prizes, and we're grateful to others across the industry for additional funding and support.

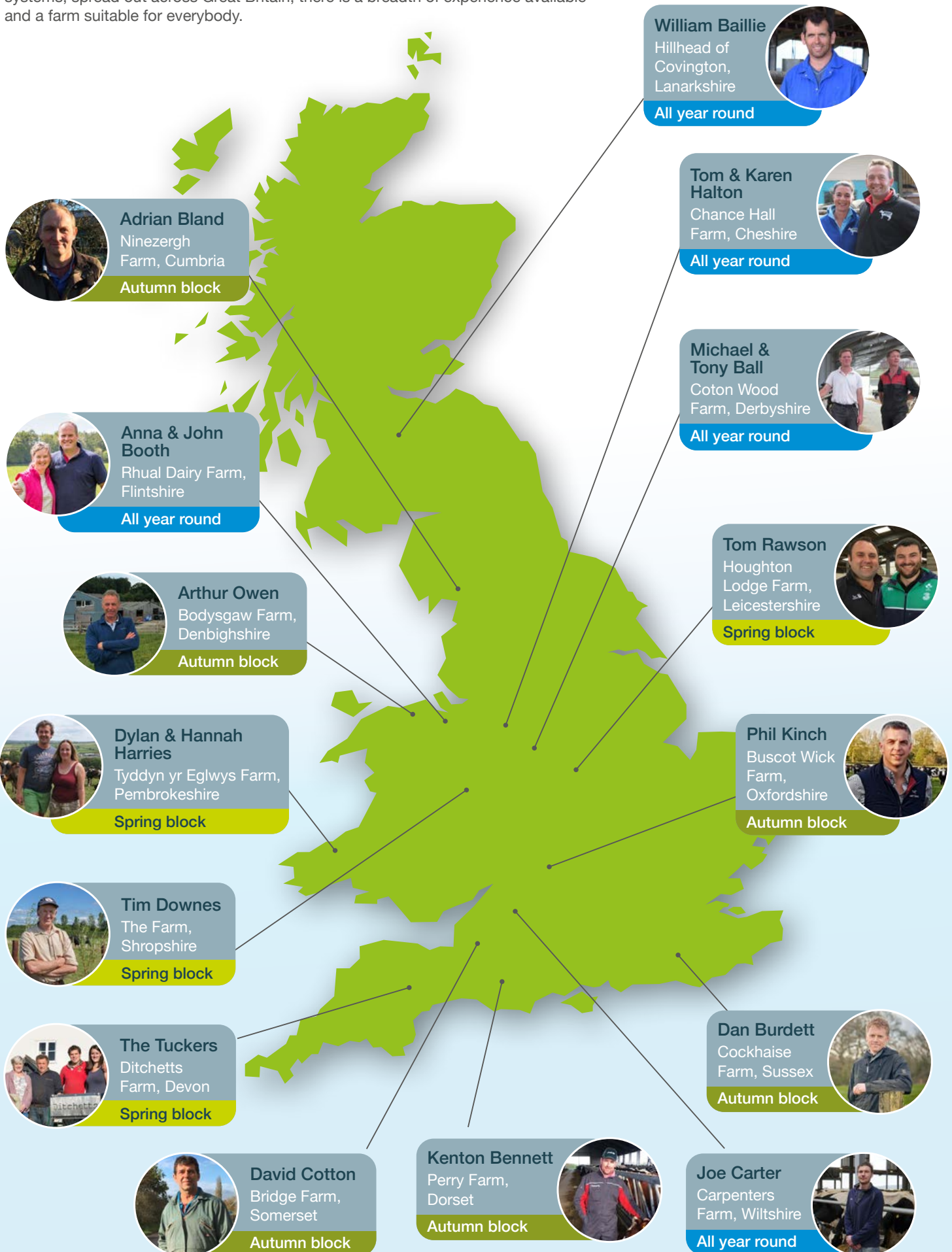
This campaign built on the work we've undertaken with Dairy UK over the last three years to deliver a strong focus on the reputation of dairy through The Department of Dairy Related Scrumptious Affairs.

Find out more about the campaign at [ahdb.org.uk/milk-your-moments](https://ahdb.org.uk/milk-your-moments)



# Expanding strategic farms network

There has never been a better time to learn from other farmers through our Strategic Dairy Farm network. Now, with fifteen farms representing all production systems, spread out across Great Britain, there is a breadth of experience available and a farm suitable for everybody.





# Organic farms add diversity

Over 250 people attended the virtual launches of Tim Downes, The Farm in Shropshire, and Dan Burdett's, Cockhaise Farm in Sussex, for a detailed look at their focus on grass-led, low input-low output organic dairy farming.

Tim moved to an organic system around 2,000 and operates a tight spring block-calving herd of 260 Irish and New Zealand Friesian's crossed with Norwegian Reds. The grazing platforms across his 365 acres are planted with Red and White Clover, Aber grasses, Chicory and Plantain, which help him to achieve 4,500 litres from home-grown forage.



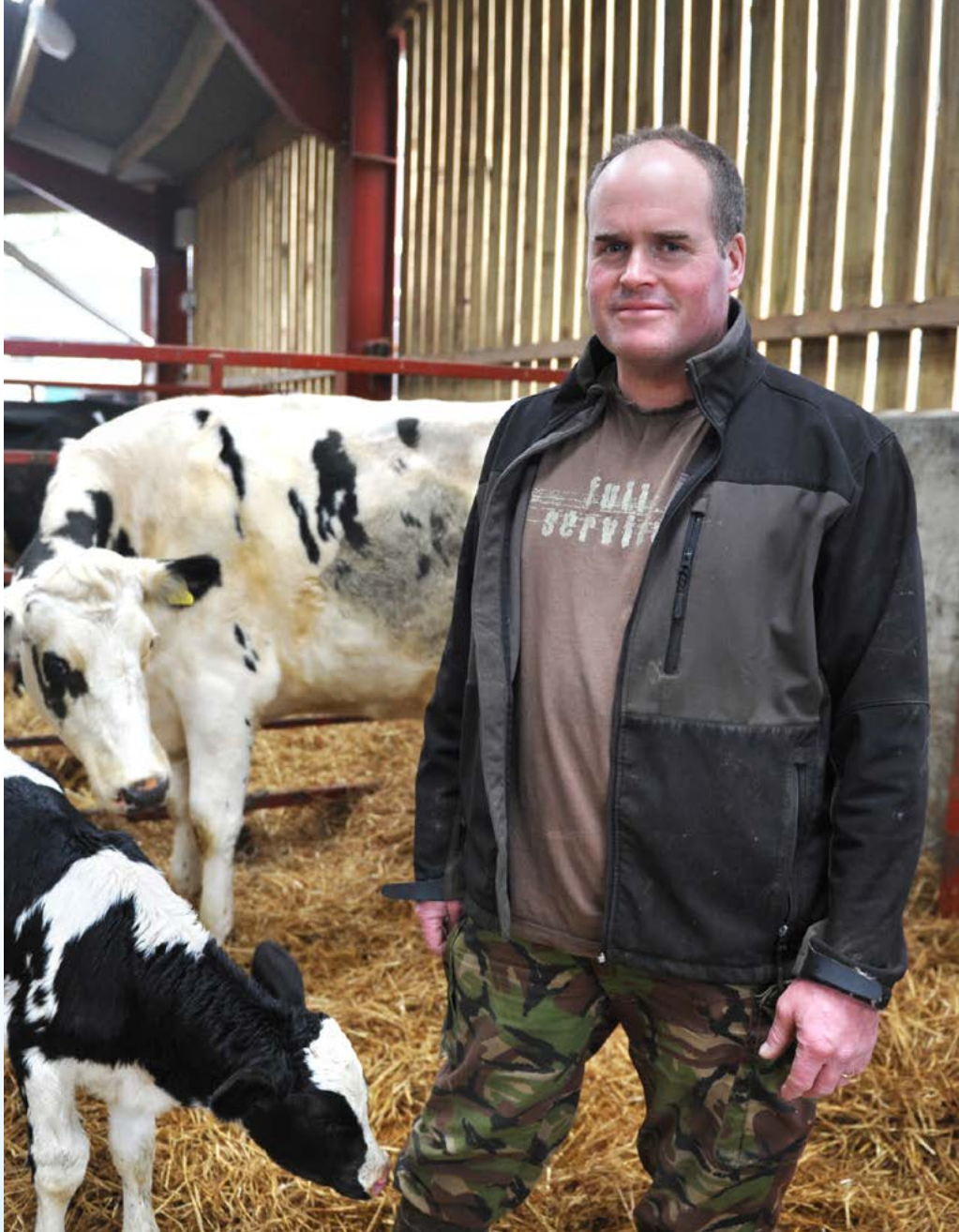
He has an infectious approach to working with nature and uses homeopathic remedies and 'silver pasture', planting trees on grazing land including willow for its anti-inflammatory properties. Those wanting to follow Tim's progress are likely to learn from his focus on driving more milk from forage, improving fertility and new youngstock strategies.

Dan shared the secrets behind his tight six-week organic autumn block-calving herd of 315 Holstein Friesian cows. The animals average 550 kg liveweight and come from New Zealand and Irish genetics. The farm has over 300 hectares of flexible grazing platform that is enabling Dan to achieve over 6,000 litres per cow.



Recently, Dan has used herbal leys to improve soil quality and increase yields. Over the next three years, he aims to reduce cow numbers to find the 'sweet spot' for efficiency, further increase his milk from forage and reduce instances of lameness in his herd.

Catch up on the launches and find other farms at [ahdb.org.uk/farm-excellence](https://ahdb.org.uk/farm-excellence)



## Transition housing improves welfare and fertility

**Strategic Farmers John and Anna Booth doubled their capacity for housing cows on a transition ration from two to four weeks by investing in a new facility at Rhual Dairy, near Mold, in 2018.**

The Booths, who run an all-year-round calving herd of 336 Holstein Friesians, also invested in a new diet mixer, which chops straw to the shorter length required during transition.

The dry cow ration is formulated to deliver 120 megajoules (MJ) of energy per cow, which consists of up of 18 kg third cut silage, 6 kg haylage bales, 6 kg maize silage, 3.5 kg chopped straw, 2 kg protein blend and 0.150 kg dry cow minerals.

Since the changes were put in place, cases of retained foetal membranes are down to 2%, left displaced abomasums to 1% and milk fever to less than 1%. They also recognised that 60% of all mastitis cases were originating from the transition period, which has now seen a dramatic drop.

Their work improving transitions was supported by Phil Clarke of P&L Agri Consulting Ltd. who described the dry period as the single most important phase of production. You can find out more about their key takeaway messages and other learning by visiting our website.



## The chronology of genetic evaluations

**Independent genetic evaluations have been published in the UK since the 1970s, and provide a means to compare different animals' performance.**

In the early days of genetic evaluations, the only information widely recorded was for milk production – milk, fat and protein – and Figure 1 shows the rapid genetic progress that has been made in the UK since the 1990s.

Although this generally had a positive impact on the fortunes of UK producers, there were unintended consequences since many traits are negatively correlated with production.

Figure 2 shows how the genetics for somatic cell count (SCC) and lifespan – each negatively correlated with milk

volume – declined as production increased. (NB A negative figure is desirable for SCC.)

Thankfully, there has been a sea change in genetic evaluations since that time. The graph also shows the dramatic recovery, which began after health and fitness indexes were introduced in the late 1990s.

These health indexes have steadily been added since the early 2000s, with Digital Dermatitis PTAs being the latest addition in April this year. Around 2/3 of the economic selection indexes are now made up of these non-production fitness traits (i.e. £PLI, £ACI and £SCI), and farmers have been quick to accept their use.

The speed at which genetic change is being made today makes the responsibility of choosing a breeding direction even more critical than in the past. While management will always play a major role in disease avoidance and cure, it is certainly possible to stack the odds in the farmer's favour through better genetic selection over the long term.

With the next bull proof run on 11 August, now is the perfect time to check your herd's genetic potential.

Sign up or review your Herd Genetic Report at [ahdb.org.uk/herd-genetic-reports](http://ahdb.org.uk/herd-genetic-reports)

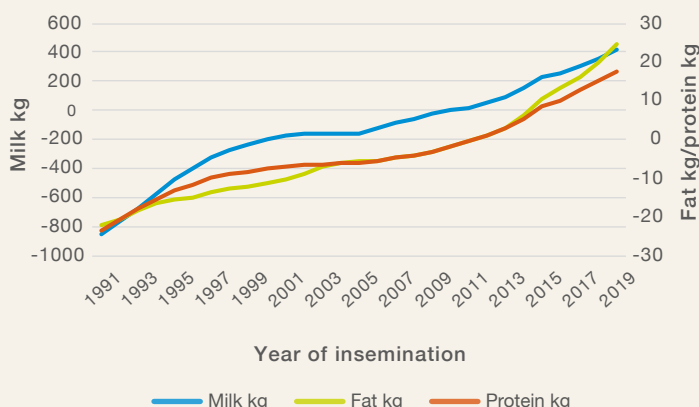


Figure 1. Sire genetic trends in kg milk, fat and protein

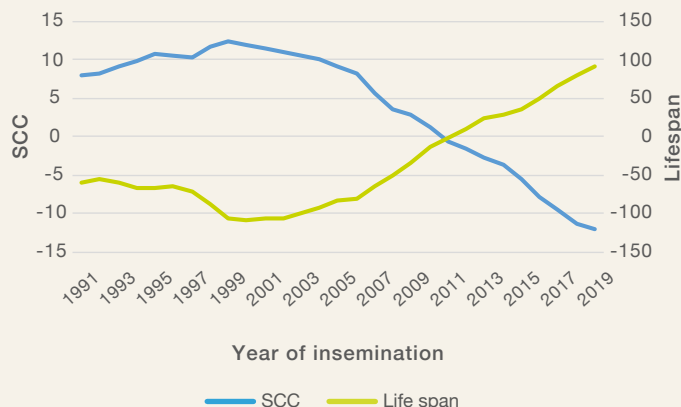


Figure 2. Sire genetic trends in somatic cell count and life span





## Stamping out lameness keeps cows on the move

**Routinely, mobility scoring helped Flintshire dairy farmer Rhys Davies reduce lameness across his herd and identify replacements for future breeding.**

Over a three-month period, Rhys was able to identify and treat cows showing early warning signs and achieved a reduction in the number of mobility scored 2 and 3 cows from 10% to 1% across his 100-cow, spring block-calving herd.

Based at Moor Farm near Holywell, Rhys has always followed the five-step approach to foot trimming, using an anti-inflammatory to treat white line cases. However, this was becoming expensive, so he was looking for ways to reduce the number of cases reaching that stage.

Rhys was equally keen to protect the industry's image by keeping lameness cases down to a minimum since his farm has a public footpath crossing through parts of the grazing land.

The farm was one of 500 farms selected to take part in the HerdAdvance project, which aims to help Welsh dairy farmers lift profitability and performance by focusing on improved herd health management and disease control.

The initiative is part of the five-year Dairy Improvement Programme, which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union.

Initially, Rhys discussed his ambitions with his vet and AHDB Knowledge Exchange Manager Ifan Owen and agreed to start mobility scoring on a monthly basis.

Ifan supported Rhys to complete the first whole herd scoring in July 2019 as the cows were leaving the milking parlour. Rhys prioritised the 10% of cows with mobility scores of 2 (lame) or 3 (very lame), with score 3 cows treated urgently and score 2 cows given early treatment.

After this, Rhys completed the next two monthly scorings by himself. The cure rate of score 2 cows between July and August was 67%, with only one new case identified in August, reducing the whole herd lameness score to 6%.

By September, herd lameness was down to just 1% (scores 2 and 3). Rhys attributes this to the fact that lame cows were identified earlier, meaning the problem was less severe and the cow recovered sooner.

Rhys said "If we hadn't got in touch with AHDB to be part of the HerdAdvance project, we wouldn't have done it. By having the routine mobility scoring structure, it has allowed us to target order of treatment and treat cows earlier than usual."

Reducing lameness cases wasn't the only benefit, as Rhys was also able to use the data to identify

replacements and add to the breeding policy. The cows are now better at showing signs of heat, making it easier to identify cows to be inseminated and get back into calf sooner, maintaining the tight calving block.

Ifan Owen said: "You can't manage what you don't measure. This is exactly the case with mobility scoring. By allowing one milking per month to monitor cow's individual mobility, a farmer can use the categorised scorings as a template, to prioritise and start targeting cases."

Rhys Davies,  
Moor Farm

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To find out more about lameness, visit  
[ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/lameness-in-dairy-cows](https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/lameness-in-dairy-cows)

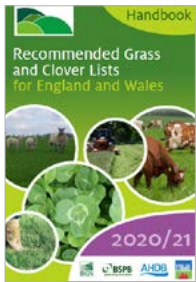
# News updates



## New AHDB Chair

The Government has appointed Nicholas Saphir as the new Chair of the AHDB Board for a three-year term. Nicholas Saphir has a wide background in agriculture, and has spent the last 18 years building Organic Milk Producers' Cooperative (Omsco) into the world's second largest dedicated organic milk cooperative, with exports of cheese, butter and infant formula grade milk powders to the USA, EU and Australasia.

## New grass varieties make the cut



Ten new varieties of ryegrass, two Hybrid and one Timothy (grass) have been added to the 2020/2021 Recommended Grass and Clover Lists (RGCL) for England and Wales.

Your copy of RGCL is included in this issue of All Things Dairy.

## Virtual events

We've been unable to hold on-farm events during the lockdown and have been running our meetings virtually, as webinars, where possible.

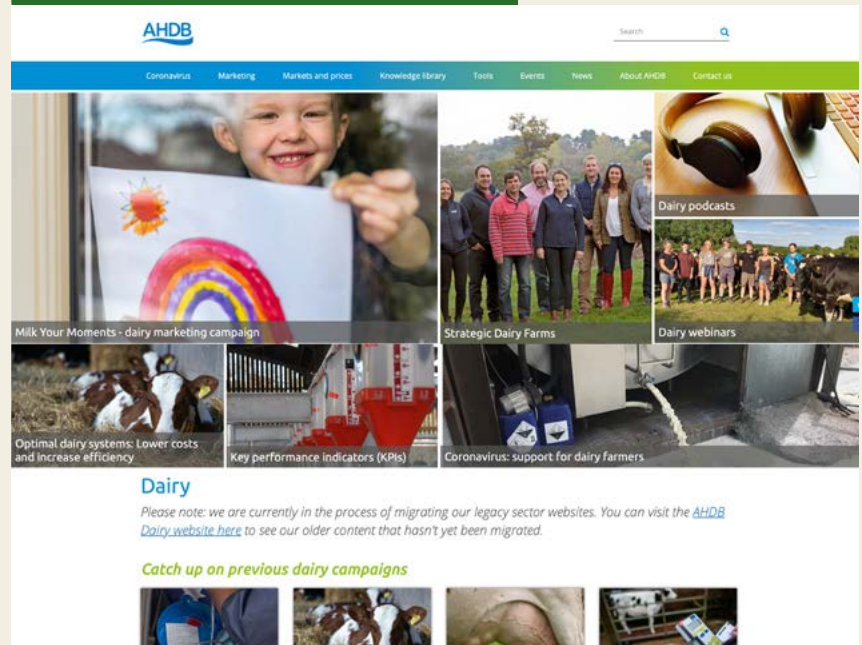
They've covered technical topics such as clover, silage clamps, mastitis and Johnes as well as introducing our new Strategic Dairy Farms.

Catch up on past meetings at [ahdb.org.uk/dairy-events-archive](http://ahdb.org.uk/dairy-events-archive)

## Website migration complete

We have now finished moving all our content to our new and improved website, where you can find the latest on news, events, publications and much more.

Visit our new website at [ahdb.org.uk/dairy](http://ahdb.org.uk/dairy)



## We're on Facebook!

To help us keep in touch with you better, we have created a new Facebook page. 'Like' our page to keep up to date with all the latest on markets, research, Strategic Farms and consumer campaigns.

 Find us at [facebook.com/AHDBDairy](https://facebook.com/AHDBDairy)



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