ALL THINGS DAIRY





YOUR AHDB DAIRY UPDATE





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Paul Flanagan, Sector Strategy Director – AHDB Dairy

Welcome to our autumn/winter update

After a challenging 18 months, I was delighted to be back at UK Dairy Day at Telford, where it was great to catch up with farmers and others across the industry. Discussions focused on our key areas of work and how we are offering value to levy payers.

We showcased our successful We Eat Balanced campaign, which returned in September to promote the health and sustainability of GB dairy to consumers. It aims to shift attitudes to dairy and featured across social media, supermarket shelves and online advertising.

By the time you read this, COP26 will be taking place in Glasgow, squarely putting the environment and sustainability on the front pages. Farming will be in the spotlight, so it's important that we all play our part and demonstrate our credentials while preparing for the future.

I'd like to highlight the fantastic work of our genetics team, who launched two new genetic indexes – EnviroCow and Feed Advantage – which will help farmers breed more environmentally friendly cows. They're leading the way as EnviroCow is one of the first genetic indexes in the world to focus solely on breeding cows for their environmental credentials.

Feed Advantage, incorporated in EnviroCow, helps dairy producers identify bulls with the greatest tendency to transmit good feed conversion onto their daughters. Both EnviroCow and Feed Advantage will help farmers have a positive impact on the use of the world's finite resources and the carbon footprint of UK dairy farming.

Finally, in partnership with Dairy UK and the NFU, we're working through the Dairy Roadmap to develop plans and programmes that demonstrate the dairy sectors' environmental credentials to key policymakers. Keep your eyes open for more updates in the coming months.

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What do I get for my levy?

We've listened to your feedback about wanting to understand how your levy is invested and how it helps British dairy farmers prosper and grow.

We've published details on our website – sharing key financial information and giving an overview of our key areas of work; three of which are highlighted here:

Consumer marketing: Your levy funded four campaigns over the last two years, delivering regular activity to shift consumer attitudes, particularly those thinking about reducing dairy consumption.

Strategic dairy farms: Your levy supports a network of 20 strategic dairy farms who share good practice through on-farm and virtual events, giving you access to industry experts and the

Dairy breeding and genetics: Over £500,000 of your levy is invested every year on genetics and genomics, which includes evaluations of over 1 million live cows each year.

Your first point of contact to find out more is your local Knowledge Exchange Manager, whose details can be found on page 7.

Learn more about how your levy is invested at ahdb.org.uk/dairy-levy



Reaping rewards from a regenerative approach

Creating a resilient and sustainable business is more than just a passion for strategic dairy farm host, Dan Burdett; it is a core belief that is driving development on Cockhaise Farm in Sussex.

Dan's father paved the way for innovation, converting the farm to organic production in 1999. Inspired by a trip to New Zealand, coupled with frustration about 'prescriptive agriculture', there was clear business sense behind the decision, with significant financial rewards.

The family now farm 300 ha with a flexible grazing platform of between 75–120 hectares depending on the time of year and grass growth. Their autumn calving herd of 240 Holstein Friesians achieve a tight block with 95% of cows calving within a six-week window.

Following in his father's footsteps, Dan continues to bring innovation to the farm. While he would not describe himself as a regenerative farmer, he is keen to adopt many of those practices.

"Regenerative agriculture is a broad-brush approach to farming. It is about looking at improving the health of soils, the lives of the people around the farm, and the economics of the business", explains Dan.

"We want to create soil which is healthier and has a more vibrant eco-system in it. We want more resilience in the grazing system. The water that comes through the farm comes out a lot cleaner, and we've got a higher level of ecology with biodiversity."

Dan's approach recognises the importance of both the cows and the land. This year, they have planted silvopasture, a practice that integrates trees and forage with grazing animals.

"Soil in fields is generally bacterially driven, and we want to create more mycorrhizal fungi networks, a sort of superhighway under the soil. The trees will really help with this and will create some shade and shelter for the cows as well as something for them to browse on."

Ultimately, this will help increase the resilience of the land grazed by the herd. "If it becomes more robust and grows through a drought, we have grass when we might not otherwise. If we don't have to reseed it as often, then we don't have to plough it up. Cows will self-medicate, so it's giving them the opportunity to eat plants other than rye-grass. It's about looking at the system as a whole."

This is a natural progression for Dan after his decision to adopt herbal leys seven years ago. "Nothing in nature exists in a monoculture. Root systems interact with one another, and variety helps to stimulate more resilience and feed the microorganisms in the soil", explains Dan.

For those interested in regenerative agriculture, Dan's advice is simple. "Just be curious. Decide what it is you want to do and why you are doing it. Write it down, talk to your family about it, talk to your staff about it and bring someone along with you on that journey."





Driving profitability with your carbon audit

Profitability and efficiency are key factors driving the success of Millands farm in Ayrshire. Strategic dairy farm hosts, Wallace and James Hendrie, were keen to explore how they could turn a carbon audit required by their processor to their advantage in their spring calving herd.

The audit at Millands showed total emissions as 1.24 kilos of carbon dioxide equivalent (kgCO₂e) per kilo of milk produced. This compares with an average of 1.47 kilos for similar dairy businesses using the same method and a GB average of 1.23 kgCO₂e. The report identified five areas the team could explore to improve their carbon footprint:

- Fertiliser use
- Energy efficiency
- Carbon sequestration
- Herd health and welfare planning
- Stock turn-over

More efficient fertiliser use is an easy win for Wallace. "Sometimes we panic a wee

bit that we are not going to have enough grass. We use 240 kilos of nitrogen fertiliser in a year." He is confident that this can be reduced, saving money and lowering the carbon footprint of the farm. "We're starting to use plantain and some different mixtures in the grass to use up the organic matter better and reduce fertiliser input. We need to have the confidence we can grow the grass!"

Exploring grass mixes and herbal leys further could prove beneficial for Wallace and James. Clover fixes nitrogen in the soil, so there is less need for an artificial nitrogen fertiliser for grass growth. With both feed and fertiliser prices high, it offers a dependable source of home-grown protein to offset feed costs. Other deep rooting species encourage soil resilience and can help with drainage, while a high legume content in a sward can fix 180 kg N/ha, reducing both fertiliser costs and emissions.

For James, his focus remains on fertility. "Efficiency improves your carbon output, so for me, it's about getting our fertility

better. Efficiency here will also drive our overall goal of having fewer costs while lowering our carbon footprint."

AHDBs recently launched EnviroCow genetic index may offer some assistance. It allows farmers to select traits for breeding replacement heifers that will be environmentally sustainable and maximise both yield and profit.

Wallace and James are eager to do their bit. "We all have responsibilities as business owners to do better", said James. "The audit has shown us that efficiency and reducing our carbon footprint go hand in hand, so it's a no-brainer, really. If we get this right, then hopefully there will be Hendries still farming this land in another 250 years."

Read the full article at ahdb.org.uk/ Farm-Excellence/Millands-Farm/ driving-profitability-with-yourcarbon-audit

Campaign returns telling the story of food and farming

Our We Eat Balanced campaign returned at the beginning of September, highlighting to consumers the positive role meat and dairy can play in a healthy, sustainable diet.

The pilot in January was seen by 15m UK households on TV and generated 80m impressions on social media. It resulted in an increase in the number of shoppers who believed dairy and red meat could form part of a healthy, balanced diet and that dairy is produced in both a natural and sustainable way.

Liam Byrne, Head of Marketing at AHDB, said: "The pilot really showed us the power and influence of social media, and so that is where we focused our efforts this autumn. We knew we needed a presence on social media, as this is where our core audience of shoppers who are reducing or thinking of reducing their meat and dairy are receiving lots of misinformation about British food and farming.

"We also know that consumers trust in farmers and their role in food production remains robust, and the campaign built on that with a focus on producers sharing their stories about how they farm and their role in maintaining our landscape and environment."

To do this, AHDB enlisted a network of 100 farmers to help promote and share We Eat Balanced messaging on social media. Activity also included short videos telling the story of British farming, told by farmers themselves.

The campaign's return followed the decision in August by the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) that the 487 complaints received about the January phase of the campaign were not upheld.

Liam Byrne, Head of Marketing, said: "We are delighted with the ASA's ruling and are grateful for the careful consideration they gave to all the points which were raised.

"This is an important day for British farming, as we can continue to communicate the benefits around consuming red meat and dairy as part of a balanced diet. We work hard to ensure our campaigns are robust and evidence based."

As well as social media, the campaign featured on supermarket shelves, online advertising with the Mail Online and full-page adverts in the i newspaper. A third phase of the campaign is planned for January, which will see We Eat Balanced return to TV screens.

You can follow the campaign
@WeEatBalanced on Instagram and
Facebook and on our Twitter @AHDB_Dairy

Find out more about We Eat Balanced at ahdb.org.uk/WeEatBalanced



Meet our Knowledge Exchange team

Our field-based Knowledge Exchange team are levy payers first point of contact for support and enquiries, helping put technical expertise and guidance directly into their hands.

Doreen Anderson, Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager, based in Scotland, tells us more about how they help farmers to learn and improve their businesses.

Engaging with our levy payers is the highlight of our role. We are in a lucky position to be able to interact with farmers, bring them together to share ideas and chat about the everyday challenges of running a dairy business.

Listening to the discussion and facilitating conversations between the individuals is key to the success of our work and delivering a valuable learning experience.

We bring this to life in various ways, including:

Farmer-led discussion groups are run throughout the country and facilitated by our team. Many have been running for years and offer opportunities for peer-to-peer learning within groups that respect and trust each other.

We're approachable and support levy payers to try new things, often gathering personalised data ahead of a meeting to improve the relevance and relatability of information.

Strategic dairy farms are facilitated by our regional knowledge exchange managers. These are individual farms that embark on a three-year journey with us to challenge themselves and share their experiences through on-farm or digital meetings.

We bring in industry experts on relevant topics to improve attendees' learning environment. We also ensure we share learnings with those who are unable to attend.

Technical meetings are regularly delivered nationwide on relevant topics such as cattle handling, breeding and transition to help upskill farmers and their teams.

Usually, we're out and about engaging face-to-face with our levy payers, but COVID-19 put that on pause. We adapted our approach, delivering over 70 webinars which have been watched almost 60,000 times over the last 18 months.

Listening to feedback, we recognise that this has enabled levy payers to watch webinars at a time that suits them and engage with like-minded farmers further afield, which they might not have done otherwise.

Above all else, we're passionate about delivering positive change on farm for the long-term health and prosperity of the industry.

If you want to understand how we AHDB can help, need pointing in the right direction or want to know what's happening in your area, I'd encourage you to get in touch with your local contact, who you can find on the opposite page.



National

Karen O'Callaghan Lowe

After completing a PhD in Veterinary Clinical Science, Karen spent 15 years farming beef and sheep, contract calf rearing, and running an equine tourism diversification business before joining AHDB in 2018.

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Nic Parsons

Nic had an early career as a ruminant feed specialist with Dalgety Agriculture, followed by a spell at Arla before joining as Agriculture Manager at Tesco. Nic leads the development of our Strategic Dairy Farm initiative.

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North East and North West

James Haque

Based in Cheshire, James runs a contract rearing heifer unit at the family farm and is a director of the Cheshire Agricultural Society. He facilitates various discussion groups, covering both all-year-round (AYR) and block-calving systems, as well as delivering on-farm meetings.

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Wales

levy payers.

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Jamie McCov

South East

Kate Harris

and South West

After graduating from Harper Adams

University, Kate spent 18 months

She previously ran four Women in

Dairy groups and recently set up an

autumn block calving group as well

as running an organic discussion

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Raised in Zimbabwe, where he

He enjoys the varied challenges

of effective knowledge exchange and says the best part of the job is

began farming, Brian has spent his

entire career involved in agriculture.

receiving positive feedback from our

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group in North Devon.

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Bryan Nicholson

working on New Zealand farms.

Jamie farms alongside her partner, milking 180 autumn calving cows. After a degree in Agriculture from Aberystwyth University, she worked for Hybu Cig Cymru and Farming Connect before completing a Nuffield Farming Scholarship.

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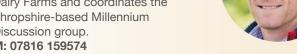
East and West Midlands, and East Anglia

Stephen West

Steve is involved in the Bull Calf forum and has an interest in genetics and practical uses of sexed semen. He has an active role in three Strategic Dairy Farms and coordinates the Shropshire-based Millennium Discussion group.

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Emily Collins

After completing an Animal Science degree at Harper Adams University, Emily joined our graduate scheme before moving to the team. She has a keen interest in youngstock and particularly enjoys running farmer discussion groups.

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Shirley Macmillan

Shirley studied agriculture and worked on English and German farms before joining Dairy Farmer magazine. Her interviewing skills facilitate meetings and discussion groups, as well as coaching farmers in the eastern counties of England.

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Scotland

Doreen Anderson

Doreen lives in the heart of Dumfries and Galloway on a beef and sheep farm. She joined our Farm Economics team in 2012, where she worked with Scottish dairy farmers, ran benchmarking discussion groups, and has promoted our Farmbench tool.

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Further details of your Knowledge Exchange team can be found at ahdb.org.uk/meet-the-team-dairy

Reducing clinical mastitis by tackling overmilking

Identifying overmilking as an issue and removing clusters sooner has enabled dairy farmer Aled Williams to reduce clinical mastitis cases by 25% in his herd.

Aled manages his herd of 85 Holstein and crossbred cows at Bryngwyn in Llangadog, Carmarthenshire. The farm is in the process of converting from AYR calving to an autumn block system.

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

The farm was seeing increased clinical mastitis cases and spikes in somatic cell count (SCC), and the decision was made to focus on mastitis control. As part of HerdAdvance, an AHDB Mastitis Control Plan was undertaken by the farm vet, Sotirios Karvountzis. By carrying out dynamic parlour testing and teat end scoring, Sotirios determined that 100% of the cows were being overmilked by between one and four minutes.

Sotirios said: "Applying a vacuum to a teat beyond the point the quarter has ceased milking is called overmilking. Prolonged overmilking is likely to lead to hyperkeratosis of the teat end, which is overproduction of keratin at the teat orifice due to the constant irritation caused by prolonged exposure to a vacuum. This may lead to teat end damage, producing a higher risk to mastitis or high SCC."

The Mastitis Control Plan identifies the main factors contributing to mastitis on farm by using milk records, clinical records, and a thorough questionnaire covering general management, milking routine, dry period management, and mastitis protocols. The Bryngwyn plan undertaken by Sotirios focused on environmental pathogens during lactation and contagious pathogens from the dry period, and a tailored action plan was created for the farm to implement.

Automatic cluster removers (ACR) are not used on the farm, and it was important to find a solution that improved animal health but did not involve major investment in the parlour. Sotirios discussed options with the team until a suitable one was identified and implemented.

The farm now removes clusters much sooner than before, which has seen a marked drop in overmilking and resultant teat damage. Clinical mastitis cases have reduced by 25% and are continuing to improve. The farm is also continuing to implement the action plan provided for further improvements in SCC.

Milking machinery and routines can have a major impact on the spread of mastitis on your farm. We recommend regular checks, maintenance and servicing to keep the milking machine in good working condition, with teat cup liners particularly important as the only part of the machine to come into direct contact with your cows.

It's also vital to ensure you have a good milking routine, as this ensures high-quality milk and happy cows, as well as helping prevent the spread of mastitis among your herd.

Find out more about the HerdAdvance project at ahdb.org.uk/herdadvance



©Aled William



Breeding cows to help reach net zero

Two new genetic indexes to help farmers breed more environmentally friendly cows were launched in August.

The first, EnviroCow, reflects the important role genetics and breeding play in improving the environmental efficiency of milk production.

Incorporating cow lifespan, milk production, fertility and the new Feed Advantage index, EnviroCow is one of the first genetic indexes in the world to focus solely on breeding cows for their environmental credentials.

Marco Winters, Head of Animal Genetics for AHDB, said: "The environmental focus of EnviroCow reflects the important role cattle breeding can play in helping the farming industry reach its goal of net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions."

EnviroCow will be expressed on a scale of about -3 to +3, where the highest positive figures are achieved by bulls that transmit the best environmental credentials to their daughters. These will be cows that are predicted to create the least GHG emissions in their lifetimes for each kilogram of solids-corrected milk they produce.

Feed Advantage, incorporated in EnviroCow, helps dairy producers identify bulls with the greatest tendency to transmit good feed conversion onto their daughters. It is expressed as a Predicted Transmitting Ability (PTA) in kilograms of dry matter intake saved during each lactation.

The most efficient cows consume as much as 400 kg less in one lactation compared with the least efficient cows, meaning that for the same level of production, there is substantial scope for cutting feed use.

"EnviroCow and Feed Advantage will help farmers have a positive impact on the use of the world's finite resources and the carbon footprint of UK dairy farming", he says. "Now they can move this up a gear with genetic indexes designed specifically to improve their dairy cow's carbon emission credentials."

EnviroCow facts and figures

- -3 to +3 scale of expression (positive desirable)
- 400 kg less feed consumed per lactation
- 1% reduction in emissions for each kg milk
- 750,000 daily dry matter intake records used
- 1st to 4th lactations used in feed intake calculation

For details, visit ahdb.org.uk/dairy-breeding-genetics

Feed savings after a bumper grass year

John Forbes, Herd Manager at Wolfhall Farm, shares how improved grassland management has taught him the importance of growing and utilising grass and the savings he has made.

John manages 320 spring and 230 autumn calving crossbred cows near Marlborough, Wiltshire. The spring herd produces 5,500 L from 1 t/cow of concentrates, while the autumn calving cows average 8,000 L from 2 t/cow and are fully housed from around 10 October. Turnout is usually in the middle of February, with both herds spending 270–280 days at grass.

Having a split block herd can produce some challenges when grazing. "It takes a bit of tinkering to balance everything", admits John. "If you get it wrong, it goes very wrong. It's a challenge to manage. We have one grazing platform, and most of the pinch is in the spring."

The 2021 grazing season got off to a challenging start with some poor weather in May, and the first cut of silage was taken around two weeks later than expected.

John originally planned to clamp all silage this year, but the first cut was so bulky that the second cut, taken six weeks after the first, and the third cut, another six weeks later, were both baled.

"The reason we made all the silage was to make ourselves more resilient to drought, as last year we only grew 20 kg DM/ha/day grass in May and June because of the dry conditions. But this year, we haven't had an issue, and it's been a bumper year", explains John.

Conditions have been so good that John applied 50 kg less Nitrogen than the same time last year as the grass hasn't needed it, with no impact on return.

Despite the 2020 drought, Wolfhall Farm had its highest grass yield since they began measuring with an average of 13.5 t DM/ha: a significant increase on 12 t DM/ha in 2019.

"What made the biggest difference was to close up autumn grass instead of grazing it off. This carried grass over into spring and pushed growth early in the season. Inputs have stayed the same", says John.

Paddock yields ranged from 10–18 t DM/ha with an average ME of 12 MJ/kg and protein at 22% (peaking at 29% this spring) for most of the year. "It makes you think twice about putting bought-in protein into the mixer wagon", John adds.

Concentrate usage has been minimal this grazing season. "Through May, we were feeding 2 kg of cake in the parlour, and in June and July, we only fed 1 kg to help cow flow through the parlour. The majority of the milk has come from grazed grass", says John.

Sign up to Forage for Knowledge to receive the latest grass growth and quality figures at ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/forage-for-knowledge



Review your farm business FARM BUSINESS REVIEW

With reductions in BPS payments beginning this year, taking a wait-and-see approach isn't an option for farmers and growers who rely on this income.

AHDB's Farm Business Review service, funded by the Defra Future Farming Resilience Fund, is designed to help those most affected by the move away from direct payments prepare for the biggest agricultural policy shift in a generation.

Aimed at beef and sheep, dairy and cereals and oilseeds producers across England, this free and impartial service provides expert advice and an online self-assessment tool to support farm businesses through this transition period and help you prepare for a prosperous future.

Those who take part will benefit from a one-to-one consultation with an experienced farm adviser to discuss your options and help you get the most out of AHDB's tools and resources, including our online Farm Business Review tool.

The AHDB Farm Business Review service will only run until February 2022, so act now to help future proof your farm business by signing up on our website at ahdb.org.uk/farm-business-review

You can also find a range of information and resources to help your business navigate the changes to agricultural policy online at ahdb.org.uk/trade-andpolicy



AgriLeader programme leads from the front

For many business owners, a task-orientated approach with attention to detail is key. But how much time and effort do you spend on managing and developing people, and ensuring your staff, family or wider team are motivated and efficiently trained in their job?

If not much, you're not alone. The AgriLeader 2030 'Bridging the Gap' report shows that only around 0.37% of businesses include people investing in formal Leadership and Management Development (LMD) training each year.

AHDB's AgriLeader team have always believed that for the UK's agricultural sector to keep progressing, farmers need to be challenged and stimulated in order to maintain development and ensure their sustained brilliance.

Whether you are the owner of multiple units, a small family farm or only just starting on your management journey, we aim to have something to support you whatever challenges you might face at your level.

We aim to provide networking opportunities for peers at different levels and collaborating with individuals who are inspirational in the way they work and lead by identifying and sharing the traits that make them so successful. Therefore, helping you become the best leader you can be, irrespective of your role in your business or the industry.

Find out how AgriLeader can help you and your business at ahdb.org.uk/agrileader



News updates

Training resources help educate children

This year we're celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Food - a fact of life FFL education programme for schools.

During this time, many thousands of teachers and support staff across the UK have received training in a variety of formats, all focusing on improving food and nutrition education in schools.

The programme is managed by the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) in partnership with AHDB.

Frances Meek, Senior Education Officer at the BNF, said: "In the first instance, FFL training consisted of face-to-face conferences and practical workshops. In the past few years, there has been a greater shift from regional face-to-face training to more online and virtual training, enabling many more teachers to attend from the comfort of their school desk or sitting room.

"In March 2020, FFL training evolved again due to the first national lockdown. We quickly reviewed our training programme, and instead of the usual face-to-face training we were all used to, everything was moved online and virtual. This did not deter teachers; in fact, quite the opposite, and between April 2020 and the end of March 2021, 1,876 teachers registered for Food - a fact of life training, which included virtual regional conferences, practical food skills workshops and webinars."

These included a session on cheese making, as well as others on making bread and sausages. Ninety-one percent of attendees reported they had used the training to update their lessons and resources.



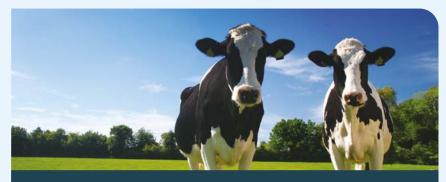
For more information on the Food a fact of life education programme, visit foodafactoflife.org.uk

Dairy Research Conference

Taking place from 22 to 26 November, the Dairy Research online conference will share the outcomes of research projects undertaken as part of our Dairy Research Partnership Initiative, led by the University of Nottingham.

During the week, you can register for sessions on the following topics:

- Lameness
- Reputation
- Efficiency, nutrition, and fertility
- Grass and soils
- Breeding and genetics
- Optimising youngstock performance



Find out more and book your place at ahdb.org.uk/events/dairy-researchconference-online

Dates for your diary

Here are some of our exciting events coming up over the next few months:

30 November - Creating simple processes for an efficient robust business: The Farm, Shropshire

- **1 December** Linking farm performance, KPI and carbon: Millands Farm, Ayrshire
- 1 December Personal effectiveness: Webinar
- 9 December Selective dry cow therapy: Heanton Barton Farm, Devon

- 9 December Transitioning to autumn block calving: Online workshop
- **16 December** Getting high yielding cows back in calf: Webinar
- **27 January** Data management: Cockhaise Farm, Sussex

Find all events and booking details at ahdb.org.uk/events

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farmers, growers and others in the supply chain. We equip the industry with easy to use, practical know-how which they can apply straight away to make better decisions and improve their performance.

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