

## The Standard

### Welcome to our Summer Edition of The Standard!

And thank you for the many kind comments regarding the last edition – it was encouraging to hear you had missed The Standard going out! As it takes quite a commitment in time and effort from our busy field-force to put the articles together, it is great to hear that this is appreciated.

We are always keen to hear feedback from our producers and we have recently commissioned EFPF to undertake a customer survey on our behalf. We will also be asking you to help us tidy up our database and ensure we have the correct contact details for you and that you receive the most appropriate information for your business from us.

We continue our mix of staff profiles, production tips, marketing developments and company news.

I am pleased to report on the successful completion of two ADS projects, co-funded by DEFRA, looking at ways of profitably enhancing the Beef Supply Chain with practical, farm based research, which will benefit producers. Full details are available on page 2.

I am also particularly pleased to welcome Tim Roberts to our team, which will increase our coverage of Herefordshire and surrounding counties to the benefit of producers in that area.

Future events to note are our AGM to be held at Bearley on 2<sup>nd</sup> July and, coming up shortly, Beef Expo 2009 to be held on 21<sup>st</sup> May at the Three Counties Showground, Malvern.

**Greg Mowbray**  
Managing Director

### OUR CHAIRMAN WRITES

I am pleased to report that Meadow Quality made a trading profit of £54,549 (£41,426 after tax) in 2008. This was a good turnaround from the loss in 2007, when we were affected by the FMD outbreaks. The improvement was partly a result of better margins, but was mainly due to reducing our costs, and was achieved despite much reduced grant income. We turned over our shareholders' funds – which exceed £1 million – more than 55 times in the year, which we believe is an efficient use of your money.

During the Autumn, the Board put considerable effort into identifying a strong future strategy for Meadow Quality. We believe that our mission of adding value for our producers through effective stock selection and marketing remains as valid as ever and we are also developing a number of initiatives to ensure we continue to offer compelling reasons for you to continue to market through Meadow Quality.

Your support is very much appreciated.



**Ian Smith**  
Chairman



### MEADOW QUALITY AT BEEF EXPO 2009

**Wondering how to take your beef business forward?  
Looking for opportunities?**

Then you should come and meet Meadow Quality staff at the Beef Expo event. We shall be exhibiting in the "Beef from the Dairy Herd" demonstration area, where we will be only too pleased to discuss future opportunities, today!

To demonstrate what is available to the beef producer from the national dairy herd, there will be three categories of cattle:  
4 x Friesian/Holstein reared bulls (4 months old)  
4 x Continental store cattle (12 months old)  
4 x Cull dairy cows  
Costs of production will be provided for each group of bulls and steers and a preview of finishing costs will be provided with the cows to facilitate interesting debate, we hope!

The highlight of the day will be a fine and progressive mix of seminars held in the demonstration area, covering the most important aspects of beef production. Meadow Quality have had the opportunity to organise the day's speakers and we have managed to recruit some of the most practical, talented and enthusiastic specialists in the industry who will deliver no-nonsense answers and solutions to each area of beef production. Please see below for details.

Timing	Speaker	Name of Company	Subject
10.00 – 10.30	Mick Johnson	Massey Feeds	Feeding rearing calves
10.30 – 11.00	Andrew Morrey	Countrywide	Feeding growing cattle
11.00 – 11.30	Dr Richard Wynn	Trident Feeds	Feeding finishing cattle
11.30 – 12.00	James Allcock	Excel Vets	Animal Health - Calves/Stores/Cows
12.00 – 1230	Lunch Break		
12.30 – 1.00	John Uffold	McCartney	Live weight marketing
1.00 – 1.30	Clive Mahony	Meadow Quality	Dead weight marketing
1.30 – 2.00	Steve Powdrill	Eblex	Virtual cow and Virtual clean
2.00 – 2.30	Tim Miller	A Proctor Group	Troubleshooting cattle buildings
2.30 – 3.00	Jamie Robertson	Aberdeen University	Troubleshooting cattle buildings

We look forward to seeing you there and looking at ways we can take our businesses forward together!

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# ARE YOU UNDER TB RESTRICTIONS?

If so, Meadow Quality can offer you a quick and effective way of marketing your beef cross calves even when under TB licence.

Over the past few years, the spread of TB and the associated movement restrictions have increased dramatically and, particularly, for dairy producers in the South West.

Many dairy farms are not equipped to handle the extra work and housing requirement for animals which cannot be marketed. Labour, cash and time resources are all stretched. There may be other costs incurred too, such as respiratory health problems due to over-stocking, and bacterial disease build up, such as joint-ill, etc.

Aware of the additional strains all of the above can cause dairy producers, Meadow Quality

has investigated and instigated a method of marketing your calves under TB2 restrictions, whilst ensuring no greater risk of spreading TB.

Approved by DEFRA, we have set up a TB calf-rearing unit in Somerset, which has quickly become a firm favourite and invaluable to many farmers, providing as it does, the flexibility to market beef cross calves at their normal age and on a regular basis. Calves should be presented having been given the correct amount of colostrum and showing good weight for age.

If you would like to find out how we can help you, please contact Meadow Quality's TB Calf Co-ordinator, Nick Hill, on 07764 810313.

**Steve Burge, calf rearer, at the TB calf-rearing unit**



**Nick Hill, Meadow Quality co-ordinator**

## NEW SUPERIOR SIRE BROCHURE LAUNCHED!



### **SUPERIOR SIRES 2009/2010**

Using quality beef genetics in the modern dairy herd is proven to increase profits – **FACT!**

At Meadow Quality we are dedicated to increasing our members' returns. One way in which we can do this is by marketing quality beef cross calves from the dairy industry that are sired by premium beef genetics.

Working with some of the UK's leading cattle breeding companies, we have put together the Meadow Quality Superior Sire List of approved bulls which will attract a premium when marketed through us and

produce progeny of the highest genetic potential for growth and conformation!

By using Superior Sires you can:

- Improve calf quality and increase saleability of your calves
- Be assured that superior genetics from specially selected bulls produce calves of good shape, fleshing ability and have the potential to grow faster
- Choose Sires that are selected for ease of calving

**Make sure you ask your AI company or your Meadow Quality fieldsman for our new updated list.**

## ADS PROJECT 458 - SEXED SEMEN TO PRODUCE MALE CALVES?

This recognised the issues that female calves, particularly within our native breeds, cause within the beef sector. Unfortunately, the main conclusion was that the technology to achieve a benefit from sexed semen to produce males is still a long way away from a commercially viable standard. Poor conception rates, slow and expensive semen separation, with a reduced viability, precludes the adoption of the system at this time.

## ADS PROJECT 454 – BENEFITS OF HIGHER GENETIC BULLS (OR SUPERIOR SIRES)

The second project was much more successful. Here we looked at the financial benefits of using AI from the top 25% of bulls at the AI stud. Over the three year term of the project, we tracked the benefits through the complete beef chain. We were expecting there to be benefits, but how much and to whom? We looked to assign what level of financial benefit under commercial conditions there might be to all parts of the chain.

Using data from our Superior Sires (HGM Bulls), AI and non HGM Sires, then tracking their lifetime animal performance, we concluded the following key points:

**Of a sample of 49,584 calves, 76.98% of Superior Sire calves graded Q or Q+,**

**compared to non-Superior Sire calves achieving only 53.84% grading Q or Q+.**

The additional financial benefit to the Dairy Producer due to better grades and higher sale weights, showed a useful **advantage of £23.65** to Superior Sired calves!

For beef finishers, there was a small improvement in growth rates, which under typical farm conditions would be too hard to measure, at about 30 grams per day.

However, over the animal's lifetime, this amounted to an additional carcass yield of 13.3kgs. At £2.20/kg, this gave an **increased value** for Superior Sired calves of **£29.34** – at current prices, this increases to over £35 per animal.

Carcass results were quite similar for both groups, although there was less variation in the Superior Sired calves, both in carcass fatness and conformation scores. What was particularly satisfying to note was that Meadow Quality was in a unique position to undertake this research, using its combined resource of a major calf marketing section, linking into finished stock sales.

**With the latest details available on the range of Superior Sire bulls recommended by Meadow Quality, no forward looking dairy farmer using AI should consider any other choice!**

## A WARM WELCOME TO TIM ROBERTS!

Tim is our new fieldsman for the Herefordshire, Worcestershire, South Shropshire, Gwent and Gloucestershire area.

Tim comes from a farming background and attended Harper Adams Agricultural College where he gained a degree in Agriculture.

Tim has kept calves since he was a lad and has been breeding pedigree Salers cattle for the past 12 years. He is a keen member of the Breed Society and serves on the Breed Council. Tim's last role was as Herd Manager for the prestigious Portman Burtley Estates herd.

Tim brings a wealth of knowledge, having spent most of his working life in the beef industry, involved in everything from breeding to finishing.

Contact Tim on 07798 731731



**Tim's pedigree Salers**



**Tim Roberts**

## WORKING TOGETHER TO DEVELOP A QUALITY PRODUCT – SHIRE MEADOWS BEEF

Meadow Quality have been supplying quality finished cattle to A E Poxon & Sons, based in South Staffordshire for the last 25 years.

As a family run business, A E Poxon have created their own **QUALITY BEEF** brand, **SHIRE MEADOWS**. This has been developed to meet the demand from customers for meat from a local source they can trust. Nick and Chris Poxon say " We champion quality throughout our business and hand select the best of our meat for Shire Meadows."

Nick and Chris Poxon personally oversee all livestock purchases, meat production and sales and over the years the family has

developed a culture where all the staff take great pride in what they do. The result is attention to detail that ensures they maintain their excellent reputation for quality beef and high levels of customer service and satisfaction.

Meadow Quality supply Nick and Chris with between 40 – 50 finished cattle per week, being mainly Continental heifers, and a small quantity of Barley bulls are also required. These cattle should weigh between 250 and 310kg, with a 3 to 4L fat cover, to meet Nick and Chris's requirements. Their traditional dressing specification ensures excellent carcase weights are returned.

All Shire Meadows beef must be produced within a fifty mile radius of their Brownhills plant, all cattle are procured from known family farms and all the beef is fully traceable, being produced on farms that Meadow Quality and A E Poxon know and trust. Discerning consumers want to buy locally produced quality beef and support independent High Street Butchers

**If you would like to be part of SHIRE MEADOWS BEEF and improve your finished cattle returns, speak to John Williams on 07703 563791.**

## STUART VILE CELEBRATES 18 YEARS IN DEADWEIGHT MARKETING



**Stuart, Sarah & Eddie, pictured with Will, aged 11, and twins Hannah & Olivia, aged 9**

Stuart, a farmer's son from Taunton, set out to become a Qualified Chartered Surveyor/Auctioneer via the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester, and after qualification and a short stint at Woolley & Wallis in Salisbury, joined Alder King at Chippenham Market in 1989. Having auctioned calves in his early days, he was offered the opportunity to manage the South-West "electronic deadweight" team in the early 1990's, from which new relationships were made with deadweight producers. In 1995, the same year that he married Sarah, he became a Director until the company was sold in 2000. In 2002, looking for new opportunities within a company with experience in deadweight marketing, he joined Meadow Quality and enjoyed 'taking up the baton' to expand the name of the company into the South West.

In his career, he looks back on one or two moments in particular with a smile – on his 'second date' with Sarah, he persuaded her to go out for a meal in the New Forest, only for her to discover that the meal was a beef burger at an abattoir open day! Sarah, however, got her own back when she went with Stuart to see one of his customer's cattle. The farmer bred Border Terriers, and the visit resulted in the purchase of "Eddie" twelve years ago, who will be a familiar figure to Stuart's clients.

Stuart says "deadweight marketing is dependent on buyers knowing you have good numbers to sell and them being prepared to offer their best price to secure them. In addition, we offer them the added value of full traceability, production integrity and operating to the highest welfare standards. Meadow Quality is best placed to maximise these benefits to our abattoir buyers and by bringing together stock from as many co-operative members as possible into decent sale lots, is able to command the best prices available."

## BEEF PRODUCTION UPDATE From Clive Mahony

The best plan of action is still to **KEEP THINGS SIMPLE AND BACK TO BASICS!**

Basic steps such as having in place a proactive whole herd health plan that concentrates on prevention rather than cure.

To make sure that buildings are well ventilated but not draughty, also that skylights are clean to allow in maximum amounts of natural light

To benchmark your business so that you are aware of which areas are under-performing or costing money so you can look at ways to address the issues.

Use the correct nutrition when designing rations that do what you want for the animal, but always remember you are **feeding the bugs in the rumen**, not the animal. Ensure that the feed does not cause the Ph in the rumen to drop as this will decrease the efficiency of the rumen. This is where a ration containing short chopped straw can help in two ways:

1. It provides a rumen mat which filters smaller particles of feed, slowing down digestion and helping with efficiency of food use which can help prevent the fall in Ph
2. The short fibre stimulates the rumen so it mixes up the rumen fluid again, keeping the Ph stable.

Remember that there are distinctive phases to an animal's life and each stage is a customer of the last stage and therefore it is imperative to get each stage right.

**Up to 12 weeks** – it is important to give the animal high quality food to get maximum growth, then from

**12 to 26 weeks** – some high quality forage can be introduced, but again, quality of feed is paramount

**From 26 weeks onwards** – the cattle need to be in a growing stage to grow frame and once 1.3 metres in height at the shoulder is reached, then it is time for:

**60 to 90 day finishing period** – finally, selection is key in maximising the return for every animal in making sure they are fully fleshed and with a nice even level of finish.

## LAMB COLLECTION CENTRE - PROFIT FROM EMPTY YARDS



Meadow Quality has recently undergone a fundamental restructure of its management team and has recently also strengthened its field-force in Herefordshire, an area where it has been understaffed for a number of years.

Our aim is to rebuild a robust and progressive relationship with our members/customers in the West Midlands and offer them a diverse marketing service to cater for calves through to finished lambs!

In order for us to market lambs more effectively with strength and power, we need a quick/efficient service to the customers with high volumes at low costs and a degree

of flexibility. Meadow Quality once again has the diverse infrastructure and experience to deliver that, but we now need four new strategic collection centres to take this opportunity forward. We are looking for sites in the following areas:

Herefordshire	(MQ rep Tim Roberts)
Shropshire	(MQ rep Robin Bebb)
Derbyshire	(MQ rep Clive Mahony)
Somerset	(MQ rep Stuart Vile)

These sites need only be an enclosed area of concrete that can be cleansed and disinfected, where two vehicles can tail board without the risk of animals escaping. Obviously, the site would be subject to DEFRA approval, which Meadow Quality would be able to administer on your behalf.

Use of these centres would enable us to collect/grade large numbers of lambs early in the week, thus giving us more strength to command higher sale values.

If you would like to discuss the opportunity further, please contact your local fields-person or Gordon McWhirter on 07703 563788.

# VISITS TO TULIP UK IN 2009

Tulip UK Limited is owned by The Danish Crown Group, which is the largest pork producer in Europe and the biggest exporter of pork in the world. Danish Crown slaughters 17.7 million pigs a year in Denmark and if they were all laid out end to end they would stretch half way round the world! Today, Tulip UK has 24 sites throughout the UK, employing 9,000 staff and accounting for 22% of the UK kill.

Simon Davies, always keen to develop a good working relationship with your abattoir customers, recently organised two producer visits to Tulip's Spalding and Westerleigh factories. The events were hosted by Mark Houghton, Tulip's Supply Chain Development Manager.



Pictured above are the group of producers who visited the Westerleigh site, near Bristol. The plant has a potential capacity of 15,000/week (Spalding is 16,000!) During the course of the visit, the party was joined

by Michael Nygaard, Operations Manager, and Paul Herring, Technical Manager, and both were able to give producers a valuable insight into the complexities of the processes and answered numerous producer questions.

The group followed the complete 'arrival through to final retail pack' process.

The tour was followed by lunch and further discussions and each person attending was generously presented with a most tasty memento by Tulip on departure!

Pictured holding one of the sample boxes is James Bodman, who owns a 380 sow unit near Devizes, Wiltshire.

All guests received a box of bacon, gammon and other goodies, never to quite make the M&S shelves!



## WHO ARE VION?

Yet further evidence of the 'globalisation' of the UK meat industry is evidenced by the acquisition of The Grampian Food Group, by this time, a Dutch owned business, Vion. Vion were already the largest red-meat processor in Europe, with particular specialisation in beef and pork, only just behind Danish Crown with the latter.

With The Grampian Country Foods Group under pressure due to pension fund liabilities, the purchase by Vion provided a much improved financial situation.

Vion is owned by The Dutch Farmers Union, once again reminding the UK that, when it comes to co-operatives, the rest of Europe is far, far ahead of us!

So, since the purchase – what are Vion's plans?

Their philosophy is based around creating 'centres of excellence'. What that actually means, is reducing the range of functions carried out at each site, centralising these to specific sites only, and investing into the very best machinery and processes to reduce waste, reduce costs, and improve product consistency.

Not that this is all necessarily good news for producers, as the recent closure of the Haverhill abattoir facility demonstrates. With pig numbers declining of course, some rationalisation was inevitable, if unwelcome. Livestock will be transferred to their Malton site, whilst Haverhill is to become a centre of excellence for cooked ham products. They say they are committed to sourcing UK product when possible and are taking a proactive approach to offering good pig supply contracts to interested producers.

## SHEEP – HALAL OPPORTUNITIES?

New protocols are being drawn up that will allow lambs/ewes to be stunned before slaughter for the Halal market, thus removing an issue which we know has concerned many producers who wish to ensure their stock receives the very best welfare treatment right through the supply chain, including slaughter. The UK is actually quite unusual in that dispensations for non-stunning still exist. A new integrated ABM/Halal standard is in development and details should be announced very soon.

The significance of the Muslim market should not be under-estimated, with sheep or goat meat being their preferred red meat; Muslims consume around ten times the amount that the average UK consumer eats!

With many millions of affluent consumers in the oil-producing Middle Eastern countries prepared to pay above average prices for top quality, ABM/Halal assured lamb, from a fully traceable source, Meadow Quality producers are ideally placed to be at the forefront of a genuinely innovative marketing opportunity. For those that wish to, there may be options later on to fix into pre-agreed sale prices up to six months ahead!

But first, we need to build volumes and consistency. If you are committed to long term lamb production, you should give this new opening very serious consideration. Perhaps you could work with neighbours to speed up the process?

The UK has a great opportunity to win a greater share of this market, but we need your support to make it happen. With the development of further regional lamb grading and collection centres, we are making this market as accessible to you as we can. For more details, contact Greg Mowbray on 01789 734135.

## SEE YOU AT THE SHOWS!

Meadow Quality has a full programme of shows for Summer 2009

We have our own stand booked at the following shows:

21 May	Beef Expo 2009 Three Counties Showground, Malvern
20-23 July	Royal Welsh Show Builth Wells
16-17 September	Dairy Event and Livestock Show Stoneleigh

In addition, we are delighted to be sponsoring classes at the following shows

Worcestershire Young Farmers Show	30 May
Three Counties Show	19-21 June
Great Yorkshire Show	14-16 July
Okehampton Show	13 August
Moreton in Marsh Show	5 September

