

# BRITISH CATTLE BREEDING CONFERENCE

Organised by



## THE HERD OF THE FUTURE

### Message from the Chair, Andy King

Welcome to the 2025 British Cattle Breeding Conference. Its timing coincides with many major challenges on the world stage that endanger global food security. Cattle breeding and production are vital requirements in the global food supply chain and underpin our supply of nutrient dense foods to feed the worlds growing population. We are also mindful that in meeting the nutritional needs of the growing population we have to tread more carefully, leaving a smaller footprint on the planet and using its resources more efficiently.

So, if cattle production is vital to support global food security, how are we to manage it in the future and, moreover what do we require from our Herd of the Future.

The conference will look at the underpinning knowledge to our breeding requirements alongside how this knowledge shapes resources used in the productions systems adopted on farm. We aim to look at what is required in different production systems to produce cattle products in the most efficient way possible. With these different viewpoints and options, it allows us at conference the platform for good discussion and debate.

The programme is proudly diverse and sets out to discuss the role of cattle breeding and production from various viewpoints, linking the fundamental science to its application on farm. Looking at what is needed, from both our future livestock and our future livestock keepers.

Finally, I would like to thank all our sponsors for their support, without which the conference would not be possible. Specific thanks also go to our speakers, session chairs and technical support behind the scenes and thank you also to the BCBC Committee, particularly Club Secretary, Heidi Bradbury, who has managed to pull everyone and everything together which is no mean feat.

On behalf of the club and the committee, we look forward to meeting you in Telford and firing up your imagination to what is needed going forward in our great cattle production industry.

*Andy King*



**20-22 January 2025**

To be held at  
**Telford Hotel & Golf Resort**  
Great Hay Drive  
Sutton Heights, Telford  
TF7 4DT

President: Duncan Sinclair  
Chair: Andy King  
Secretary: Heidi Bradbury



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Monday 20 January

14.00 – 17.00 Bovine Workshop with AHDB



**Debunking myths and breaking down barriers**

Despite the huge potential benefits of genetic tools for cattle breeding, uptake is still underutilised. We want your ideas to address the common misconceptions about genetics and genomics, for both dairy and beef. Our panel will then lead a discussion around other barriers to uptake and what we can do to allow more farmers to benefit from the genetic tools available to them.

18.30 Wine Reception - sponsored by Neogen



19.30 Dinner served in the Restaurant

Tuesday 21 January

Beef Day

09.00 Club Chair Andy King opens the conference

**Session 1 - Securing the Future**

Sponsored by: AHDB



Chaired by: Dr Alex Brown

**09.05 Prof. Nigel Scollan**, Professor of Animal Science & Director, Institute for Global Food Security, Queens University Belfast

**Food security, one health and animal sourced foods**

Food security, the challenge of providing the worlds growing population with access to safe, affordable and nutritious food all the time and in ways our planet can sustain and against backdrop of climate change and biodiversity loss, continues to be a major challenge for society. The deep connection between animals, humans and the wider planetary environment and a One Health approach is receiving increased political attention as a solution to some of the greatest health threats we face today including increasing zoonotic disease emergence, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), food safety and security. The inextricable links between Global Food Security and One Health are evident and need for enhanced and accelerated innovation, investment and partnership are required.

**09.30 Graham Wilkinson** CEO, AHDB & **Samantha Charlton**, Director, AHDB Beef & Lamb  
**Unlocking the success of British Agriculture in an evolving landscape**

The consumer landscape is evolving at a rapid pace, and it's time to challenge our traditional assumptions. Join Graham & Sam as they dive into the dynamic future of our industry. Discover how a blend of British exports, industry reputation, animal genetics, and much more can come together to pave the way for our shared success. Get ready for an insightful journey that will equip us with the tools & knowledge to secure our industry's future.

09.55 Panel Discussion



10.10 Coffee

**Session 2 - Back to the Future: Protecting our Genes**

Sponsored by: Neogen



Chaired by: Dr Harriet Bunning

**10.40 Tullis Matson**, Director, UK National Livestock Biobank

**UK National Livestock Biobank - For Farming & Food Security**

The UK National Livestock Biobank is a farm animal gene bank, established to ensure UK livestock breed and herd preservation, and national food security. Based upon skin sample cryopreservation, we aim to be the equivalent of the Millennium seed bank and other seed stores and repositories but for our crucial livestock sector.

We Exist Because Our Livestock Breeds and Food Security Are At Risk.

**11.05 Ruth Dalton**, Independent Farming Advisor, Kendal  
**Return of the native - how cattle breeds from the past may hold the key to the future**

After the intensification of agriculture in the second half of the C20th, native cattle numbers fell, replaced largely by continental breeds. Some native breeds became extinct, and others reached critically low levels. Ruth will talk about how she is helping to reduce inbreeding levels in the UK's rarest cattle breed, and how, for many farms, our native breeds may be a sustainable - and profitable - choice for the future.

**11.30 Marco Winters**, Head of Animal Genetics, AHDB  
**Making Safe and Effective Breeding Decisions**

Informed breeding decisions can dramatically improve performance and productivity. Understanding the data and tools available is essential in selecting sires and dams with high genetic merit that meet the farm's breeding goals. AHDB's national dairy evaluation provide the genetic traits and indexes allowing farmers and industry to make effective breeding decisions; while monitoring inbreeding and recessives can ensure genetic progress is pursued without compromising health.

11.55 Panel Discussion

12.15 Lunch

**Session 3 - Efficient Technology**

Sponsored by: QMS



Chaired by: Bruce McConachie

**13.20 Prof. Tianhai Yan**, Head of Ruminant Nutrition Unit of Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute & Sir John Hammond Award Recipient 2024 (awarded by BSAS & BCBC)



**AHDB Feed into Beef Project - Proposed changes to UK beef nutrition models**

The Feed into Beef project aimed to update UK beef feeding systems of AFRC (1993). The outcome of this project includes the development of new nutritional models for feed intake and energy feeding standards. The protein feeding standards were reviewed and proposed. These new models provide updated nutritional standards to feed UK beef cattle.

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**13.50 Jim McRobert**, Technical Manager, Carrs Billington  
**Feed efficiency in pasture based beef production – a data driven approach**

This presentation explores the critical role of measuring feed efficiency in pasture-based beef systems, emphasising how new methods and data analysis can drive production improvements. By delving into the latest research and practical applications, the session will highlight strategies to enhance feed efficiency, ultimately leading to more sustainable and profitable beef production. Attendees will gain insights into the journey of improving efficiencies that may be essential for the future of the beef industry.

**14.20 Prof. Jonathan Statham** Chief Executive, RAFT Solutions Ltd; Chair Bishopton Veterinary Group  
**Sexed male Stabiliser semen on the journey to Sustainable British Beef**

Artificial insemination (AI) and sexed semen represents a huge opportunity for our beef industry. Excellent reproductive performance is a key pillar of the journey towards net zero. Sustainable British beef breeding targets herd genetics precisely for individual farm conditions and maximising health & feed conversion for resilience and efficiency. Good herd management of a pre-agreed AI programme, including disease control, precision nutrition and semen quality testing is essential to achieve potential. Sexed male semen can significantly increase annual herd suckler beef yields and income by positively moving from 50:50 towards 80:20 bull calves and consequently reducing emissions intensity.

14.50 Tea

**Session 4 - Future Sustainable Beef Systems**

**Sponsored by: Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society**  
**Chaired by: Ben Harman**



**15.20 Robert Gilchrist**, Chief Executive Officer, The Aberdeen Angus Cattle Society & **Jamie Leslie**, Beef and Sheep Farmer, Scholland Farm

**Breeding for sustainable suckler production**

This session will explore the genetic traits that align with sustainable suckler beef production and that can balance productivity and profitability with environmental delivery. Jamie Leslie, who manages one of the largest suckler herds on the Shetland Isles, will explain how adopting a strict genetic selection policy has allowed him to build a more sustainable system by maximising homegrown resources and minimising costs.

**15.50 Neil McGowan NSch**, Beef & Sheep Farmer, Incheoch Farms

**Selecting for the Suckler Cow of the Future**

Coming from a pedigree breeding background in beef and sheep, a Nuffield Scholarship 10 years ago shook up Neil McGowan's vision of beef production and breeding. He saw the suckler cow of the future on his travels and will share how he tracked her down. Neil will explain how his breeding program has adapted to replicate her on the family's Perthshire Farm, and his thoughts on the progress made.

**16.20 William Mayor**, Farms Development Manager, Yeo Valley Farms

**Dairy Beef Role in a Regenerative Organic Farming System**

Yeo Valley Farms operates a Regenerative Organic Farming System across 800 hectares. The farm's goal is to produce real, natural, healthy food to nourish people and the planet. Multiple enterprises work in harmony, with the session focusing on the Dairy Beef enterprise. The cattle, a mix of pure British Friesian steers and Angus crosses, follow a regenerative grazing strategy targeting biodiversity, soil health, cattle health, and daily live weight gain (DLWG) within the farm's woodland pasture project.

16.50 Chair Andy King close the Beef Day sessions

17.15 BCBC Annual General Meeting

19.00 Champagne Reception

19.30 Annual Club Dinner

After Dinner Charity Event 'Heads & Tails' game raising funds for RABI



**Dress code:** Business Casual

**Wednesday 22 January**

**Dairy Day**

09.00 Club Chair Andy King opens the Dairy Day

**Session 5 Healthy Herd = Efficient Herd**

**Sponsored by: Livestock Information**  
**Chaired by: Joe Banks**



**09.05 Martin Jenkins**, Head of Transforming Farming: for healthier animals, better enforcement and the AHWB, DEFRA

**Get funding to improve animal health and welfare**

The encroachment of health conditions and endemic disease into a herd has real impacts on a businesses' bottom line. In this session you'll have the opportunity to hear from Defra about the financial assistance currently available to help improve the health, welfare and productivity of your animals. That includes fully funded vet visits offering diagnostic testing and practical advice to help you tackle BVD if you have it and reduce the likelihood of BVD or other diseases spreading to your farm.

**09.35 Prof. Andrew Dowsey**, Chair in Population Health Data Science, Bristol Veterinary School

**Developing artificial intelligence to monitor changes in social behaviour for the early detection of disease in dairy cattle**

Our comprehensive video monitoring platform at the John Oldacre Centre for Dairy Welfare & Sustainability Research enables us to track the behaviours of each individual in our herd 24/7, linked to health and production records. Underpinned by our recent research revealing changes in social behaviour with subclinical mastitis, we describe progress to date in the development of an automated artificial intelligence system for health and welfare monitoring.



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**10.05 Ben Williams**, Sustainability Manager UK & EU,  
Leprino Foods

**Genetic gain – Are we squandering a fantastic asset?**

Leprino Foods have spent two years working with farmers to develop efficiency programmes, supporting a reduced carbon footprint and greater farm profitability. The programmes have shown that many farms are selecting for greater productivity, quality and resilience in replacements however, whilst the genetic potential is there, the environment and management do not match.

10.35 Coffee

**Session 6 - Dairy Breeding Science: What's holding us back?**  
Chaired by: **Matt Gue**

**11.05 Andrew Thompson**, Consultant, Preston

**How will dairy farmers need to adapt to the changing world of the genetics industry, in search of the invisible cow?**

As with many parts of the agricultural industry, the bovine genetics supply world is consolidating and has a number of complex dynamics to overcome to be sustainable. The paper will highlight key issues facing the industry, whilst giving direction to dairy producers of how science can still allow them to create genetic progress faster than ever.

**11.25 Andrew Rutter**, Herd Manager, Clayhanger Hall Farm

**Developing Future Dairy Genetics at Farm Level**

From the perspective of a dairy farmer, how do we go about breeding or acquiring the herd we want and need at home? What genetic solutions are available and how best can we use them? Is the industry doing enough to help us manage inbreeding, or even sourcing the genetics we need as a UK farmer? What are the roadblocks that may be holding us back or restricting our access to genetics on our top females, and why are they there?

**11.45 Prof. Mike Coffey**, Professor Livestock Informatics, SRUC

**Equipping UK breeders with tools to meet the environmental and sustainable challenges of the future**

UK indices have developed over 40 years to become world leading. The organisational structures to deliver those indices have changed and EGENES is now a world class evaluation centre delivering weekly genomic evaluations. Geopolitical changes and government focus on environment requires EGENES to adapt accordingly to enable delivery of genetic tools that are fit for that future. That will also require changes in the structure and funding of EGENES to make it fit for the future.

12.05 Panel Discussion

12.25 Lunch

**Session 7 - Taking care of the next generation**

Sponsored by: **Coop**

Chaired by: **Kate Hoare**



**13.30 Prof. Ginny Sherwin**, Clinical Associate Professor in Farm Animal Medicine, School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, University of Nottingham

**Optimizing Heifer Rearing: Balancing Efficiency, Profitability, and Welfare**

How can we ensure that our heifer rearing practices are both efficient and profitable while also supporting longevity and welfare? This lecture delves into various methods to assess and improve the efficiency of heifer rearing on individual farms, with a focus on maximizing profitability and sustaining animal welfare.

**14.00 Sophie Gregory** NSch, Dairy Farmer, Home farm  
**Ferrari or Micra: Striking the Right Balance**

Finding the ghost cow no one knows who is probably the most profitable cow on the farm. Our journey as young farmers finding our feet farming and breeding a herd that suits our farm and system. Tools and strategies we have used to find that cow and how when you think you've got there the climate changes and adapting is essential.

**14.30 Hannah Batty** NSch, Clinical Director at LLM Farm Vets

**People. Processes. Potential: A blueprint for great team management on dairy farms**

During this session Hannah hopes to share her learnings from her Nuffield scholarship, all about great team management, helping you to reflect on how to get the most out of your own teams at home. What tools can you use to better understand yourself and the people you work with? How can we get everyone striving for success together? Top tips for helping you unleash your people potential!

15.00 Chair Andy King closes the conference

15.10 Tea available

**Booking Information**

- Delegate places from £186 inc VAT
- Early Bird bookings until 1st December 2024 - see website to book
- Discounts on group bookings of 5 people or more available until 1st January 2024 contact Heidi for details
- Young Person / Student Discounts available - see website to book
- Accommodation available at extra cost (Single Occupancy £125 per night)

Please contact the secretary for further information at [heidi.bradbury@cattlebreeders.org.uk](mailto:heidi.bradbury@cattlebreeders.org.uk) or book your place online at [www.cattlebreeders.org.uk](http://www.cattlebreeders.org.uk)