

# GrasslandNews

## Come and join us in October

### LIC Pasture to Profit conference news

**Save the date... our annual conference is going to be bigger and better than ever, and it's one event you certainly will not want to miss this autumn.**

Listening to the feedback from dairy farmers across the country we've decided to focus on the ground-breaking work at Lincoln University on the South Island of New Zealand.

We'll be bringing a lead speaker who will present on the production, profitability and environmental challenges they have overcome, then relating this to farming in the UK and identifying where you can get more from your farming business.

We're in the process of putting our panels of speakers together now, so keep an eye open for the announcements over the next month or so. But one thing we can say is that we are planning on having something to suit almost every dairy farmer, no matter what system or farm you run. Booking on Eventbrite opens in April, and as we are limited on numbers, we suggest you book early to be assured of your place.

We will have plenty of time for discussion and questions, and plan

to produce some dairying KPIs for those who attend post event – all designed to make you challenge what you are doing and follow a path that will help you introduce performance improvements.

Work that will be covered by the Lincoln University team will include:

- Nutrition, health and welfare of herds;
- Efficient use of water and nitrogen for grass, crop and milk production;
- Mitigation of the environmental impacts of dairying through soil, plant and nutritional approaches;
- Grazing behaviour, intake, and rumen function on different forages and grazing management practices;



- Novel forages and systems for increased milk production and reduced environmental impact; and
- Nutrition and performance of dry cows on different winter forages and utilization systems.

For the first time our conference will be held at Stoneleigh Park in Kenilworth, Warwickshire, and the hotel on site, the Stoneleigh Park Lodge, is already taking bookings.

The conference itself will be on October 16 and will start at 0850. On October 15, we will be holding a farm walk on a local farm in the afternoon, and holding our dinner that evening.

Ring **01725 553008** for more information





# Come and join us at the BGS farm walks in Yorkshire and South Wales this spring

Two important dates for your diary – Tuesday April 9 and Tuesday April 30. The first is in Yorkshire, the second in North Wales. See below for some background on the farms, and follow the details on the invitations to register to attend on-line.

Castiles Farm is no ordinary Yorkshire Farm. Perched 750ft above sea level, with areas of rough grazing adjoining the moors, it's a dairy farm in transition... and what a transition it's going through.



Sean and his father Colin with a couple of their cows at Castiles Farm

Father and son partnership, Colin and Sean Nicholson, were running Castiles Farm near Ripon on an all-year-round calving system, with 120 pedigree Holsteins milked robotically some six to seven years ago.

Today they are a long way down the path of transitioning to a primarily grazing New Zealand-like system with more cows, a Holstein X NZ Friesian cow, autumn calving in as tight a block as they can manage, with a much lower concentrate bill.

The results have been amazing, and the farm will prove of great interest to farmers making a visit there on Tuesday April 9 when the first of the British Grassland Society spring walks, held in conjunction with AHDB and LIC, with media partner British Dairying, is being held.

"We're looking forward to explaining why we took the decisions we did, how far we've got, and how much further we have to go," explains Sean. "It hasn't all been plain sailing, and we still have a bit to go, especially with fertility, but we definitely made the right decision."

The pedigree Holsteins were housed all-year-round, and the first big change came when they decided to graze the cows for as long as they could – usually from February to November – and rip out the robots.

"We were averaging 39 litres/day but when my father paid a visit to Wisconsin and saw the longer-term effects of the genetics we were using, he came back and we discussed in detail what he'd seen. We came up with the plan together, convinced we needed a system change. The cows were not lasting long in the herd, and the quality of the milk was poor.

**Come along on April 9 to find out, first hand, how the farm's transition is working.**

Our second spring walk on April 30 is at the 86ha Trelyffaint Farm, Nevers, Newport, Pembrokeshire where challenges that include getting the right cow, the ever-changing climate, ensuring the right work life balance, and managing a seasonal workload, keep farm manager Peter Cozens on his toes.

Peter runs the 86ha unit for Rex Paterson Farms Ltd, also looking after a neighbouring farm and 27ha of rented



Peter Cozens with his cows at Trelyffaint Farm

ground cut several times during the season for silage.

"Our aim is to keep the system here as simple as possible," he says. "Grass is our basis, either for grazing or silage, so we need a cow that's the right type to maximise productivity, quality and performance.

"We aim for a strict autumn calving block, with all cows calving down outside over a 10-week period. They start on self-fed silage on October 1... it's vital we get and keep them in good body score condition to get them back into calf."

Peter milks around 190 crossbred cows and says the aim is to improve the type of cow milked with increased milk solids as he's on a constituent contract with his milk buyer Arla. "The farm is not over-extended financially so there's no drive for expansion or

capital investment. We want to get more performance from what we have."

When the farm was taken over in 2010, the herd had a heavy Shorthorn, Jersey and British Friesian influence. Today Peter feels some of the cows are too big, he's aiming to a 480-500kg cow that can yield her bodyweight in milk solids, and has introduced more Jersey blood, KiwiCross® and some Norwegian Red.

"At the end of the day we're wanting an easy-care cow, one that delivers on size, solids and animal health. We're in a TB hotspot here, and we've lost 13 cows this year, so that's not helping our empty rate. However, I'm disappointed with fertility this year, our submission rate was good, but we had 29% barren – that's double the usual.

"Why? I think a number of factors came to play. The drought last summer didn't help, we've shortened our calving period so that's affected things, and perhaps I took my eye off the ball a little as the second farm came on board and I was busy sorting things out there. Normally we will cull out any barren cows before they come inside, as they are just expensive to keep over the winter, but with questions over TB, we don't really have that flexibility at the moment."

**So come along and find out how Peter and his team are doing, and what he sees as his secret to success moving forward.**



Cows at Castiles Farm coming in for milking along the newly-installed farm tracks

## Programme for April 9 2019

Venue: **Castiles Farm, Ripon HG4 3PU**

Timing: **Registration at 1030am with a welcome at 1100am.**

**Registration: Pre-registration is required.**

To book register at [ke.events@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:ke.events@ahdb.org.uk) or phone **01904 771218**

Farm walk to be hosted by Sean and Colin Nicholson, facilitated by AHDB and LIC and will include the transition from AYR to autumn block calving, grassland management, forage management (using a multi-cut system) and breeding the right cow.

At 1300 there will be a round up by BGS, followed by a light lunch and opportunity to talk to the trade sponsors.

**PLEASE NOTE THIS IS A HIGH HERD HEALTH STATUS FARM AND ENSURE YOU ARE WEARING CLEAN AND APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR**

**British Dairying** is the media partner for this event.



Cows at the self-feed silage face at Trelyffaint Farm

## Programme for April 30 2019

Venue: **Trelyffaint Farm, Nevers, Newport SA42 0NZ**

Timing: **Registration at 1030am with a welcome at 1100am.**

**Registration: Pre-registration is required.**

To book register at [ke.events@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:ke.events@ahdb.org.uk) or phone **01904 771218**

Farm walk to be hosted by Peter and Barbara Cozens, facilitated by AHDB and LIC and will include autumn block calving, the simple way; managing the people 'jigsaw'; maximising the benefits of the easy-care cow and utilising grass simply, whether grazed or fed as silage.

At 1300 there will be a round up by BGS, followed by a light lunch and opportunity to talk to the trade sponsors.

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU ARE WEARING CLEAN AND APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR**

**British Dairying** is the media partner for this event.



Sean with his herdsman Stuart Clapham and a group of their milkers





## Breeding objectives and bulls that drive them

By Timothy Bunnett, LIC Europe sales operations manager

Regardless of farming system, LIC encounters many farmers in the UK and New Zealand with similar breeding objectives-to breed a cow that's:

- An efficient convertor of feed into profit on their payment system (litres or solids);
- One that's better than the previous generation;
- Is fertile, usually measured by the time it takes to get back in calf or calving interval, which impacts the days she is available to be milked; and
- One with functionality... having great longevity in the herd, easy calving and a well supported udder.

Different production systems have variations in production (e.g. volume) and profitability. The type of farm system per se. does not dictate its profitability. Profit is less to do with production system and more to do with efficient management of production and costs within the system. A farm can be profitable or otherwise within each system.

With all this in mind, LIC Europe select bulls to suit the varied needs of UK customers from highly ranked bulls in New Zealand.

### LIC bull teams for 2019

#### HOLSTEIN-FRIESIAN

The priority for a Holstein-Friesian bull in the UK is to bolster the existing herd by introducing a cow that will be comfortable in an increasing grazing environment. Whether it be 114057 Marie FI Golddigger with his bigger frame and high milk volume, or 112034 Carsons FM Cairo with 1753 daughters being milked in NZ, 98%+ reliability and great capacity, these bulls should leave a cow that can do her liveweight in milk solids, if she is managed right.

You can be confident that the percentage of milk solids/litre should continue to increase in your herd - Cairo's daughters milking in New Zealand average an amazing 8.6% solids. That's on top of high litres and fertility, so he's a great addition to any herd. A bonus to be expected is the introduction of a small amount of heterosis, positively contributing to the health, fertility and longevity of their daughters.

#### JERSEY

For Jerseys in 2019, LIC is bringing a balanced mix of new graduates and well-proven older bulls to the market. LIC Jerseys are establishing themselves as ideal for the grazing herds of UK and Ireland. With interesting times ahead as the world realigns the milkfat and protein ratios, 314052 Crescent Excell Misty ET and newcomer 315009 Riverview and Dexter S2J have attracted plenty of interest because of their high fat and great capacity. This is the best LIC Jersey team ever introduced to Europe, being efficient as converters of feed into profit, with good liveweight, high fertility and strong health traits.

#### KIWICROSS®

511011 Priests Sierra is already sold out over Europe, which is a testament to the additional milk solids his daughters produce. Newcomer 515058 Kahurangi Izabull has great breeding worth. LIC is showing a strong and interesting line-up of Kiwicross® bulls in 2019.

Crossbreds make up 53% of the of all AI calves in NZ for good reason. They've demonstrated high performance for the key goal of efficiency of milk production, with the additional benefits of heterosis. Cow efficiency under pastoral or semi-pastoral farming advocates that the most efficient cows are up to 530 kilos liveweight. At liveweights above this, a cow cannot harvest sufficient grass at peak production to support both milk production and her own body maintenance requirements.

Currently crossbreds can be used by UK farmers crossbreeding between Holstein-Friesian and Jersey, who wish to stick to the more Holstein-Friesian side of the cross. But times are changing with the relatively high value of milkfat, so there could be movement towards the 50/50 Holstein-Friesian and more Jersey mix. Only time will tell.



## Winner snaps his way to New Zealand



When you're not in it, you can't win it... that was the belief that persuaded Welsh dairy farmer Aeron Jenkins to enter the LIC photographic competition a few months back.

When he found out he'd won, he simply couldn't believe his luck, and his wife Glenys said she wanted to see the written confirmation, she

didn't believe they would be jetting off to the other end of the world to visit the New Zealand Fieldays.

"It's unbelievable," says Aeron. "I've been to New Zealand twice before, but I learn so much when I am out there and meet so many interesting people, and to get the chance to visit the Fieldays is just fantastic."

Aeron along with two of his sons (who are the main decision makers), run the Pentrefelin Farm at Talsarn close to Lampeter and milk just over 400 cows. His wife now works off farm since the boys have been home. He's been using LIC genetics on all his milkers since 2001, and says he is passionate about the black and whites, mostly a New Zealand Friesian type with a KiwiCross® used on the heifers.

"The bull calves have a value for us, and we get a fair return from the black and whites," he says. Friesian AI bulls are used for the first three weeks, then Belgian Blues for the next five weeks, before finishing off with a couple of their own Friesian sweeper bulls they rear on each year.

The farm is a total of 700 acres, with 190 owned and the remainder rented. While the farm buildings are at 250ft above sea level, parts of the farm are at 1000ft, so the grazing platform totals 225 acres.

"I've been spring block calving for more than 40 years, and I'm not going to change," says Aeron. "It works well here and to be honest I'd rather go out of milk altogether than go all year round." He aims to calve inside a 10-week block, with 50% calved in the first two weeks. "It has been a little slower this year, I'm not really sure why. Last year we calved 340 in 35 days, this year it is more like 310."

One of the main changes on the farm has been a move to three, rather than two, cuts of silage. It's all baled and Aeron says he saw a big change in the quality. He outwinters all his youngstock on deferred grazing and particularly noticed better weight gains in the yearlings this year, pointing to the fact they have reached their target bulling weights with two months to go.

The farm won the BGS Grassland Farm of the Year title in 2016, and Aeron believes good grassland management is key to making a profit. "We use a plate meter religiously, walking at least once a week from the beginning of February, and taking this extra cut of silage has definitely improved the grass quality. We're on heavy clay loam, the land is not very free-draining, and we don't have strict paddocks, we move the electric fencing regularly to manage the platform."

The farm is very committed to LIC genetics, and Aeron says he always selects first on type. "If you don't like seeing what you're milking there's no pleasure being in the milking parlour." He notes that udder attachment and teat placement is very important, followed by fertility, and then fat and protein content.



His cows are averaging 5740 litres at 4.5% butterfat and 3.6% protein. "We're looking for a mature weight of around 520kgs. Last year we sold 55 in-calf heifers but this year they were all retained so 25% of the herd will be heifers. As the home farm is entirely a grazing platform with no options of bring in additional grazing, the stocking rate is around 4.5 cows/ha.

An early influence on the herd was Balsoms Karl, with Aeron saying he liked everything about this bull, just pointing out that perhaps some of his cows were too docile. "But they had udders to die for and lasted so well in the herd."

Since then he has used Hugo, Halfvolley, Wizard, Dairyman, Millennium, Sweet Dream, KelsBells, BusterErnie, Ultimate and Hammer. "I tend to use the same bull team for two years and then change".

"Grass is everything here. We graze everything we can walk to. It's the centre of our whole farming operation. We're increasing dry matter yields, up to between 12 and 13 tonnes of dry matter currently and improving quality. We normally feed between 800 and 900kgs concentrate a year but in 2018, because of the drought, this increased to around 1.2 tonnes a head".

Aeron and Glenys are leaving for New Zealand in May, ahead of the Fieldays so they can catch up with some friends and do some travelling. While they have visited before, it was during a different time of the year, so they are very keen to experience another season.

His winning photograph was taken with an iPhone and captures the bulk of the cows walking into the parlour at Pentrefelin. The red tailpaint used is clearly noticeable, although Aeron says this may be a thing of the past, as he is just installing a Saber™ drafting system that combines a heat booth that will identify bulling animals from the patches read on their backs.

"I'm really looking forward to the trip and can't thank LIC enough for running the competition and organising our visit," he says. "You learn so much from a tour like this, and I'm sure I'll come back with some new ideas that we'll discuss implementing in the future."



# Introducing the new members of the team

## David Power

Irish born and bred, David has returned home from farming in New Zealand. He's also worked with grass-based dairy systems in Chile and is a firm believer that the New Zealand cow is the most efficient animal at converting grass to milk.

"I have faith that LIC has the genetics to produce this cow for Irish farmers, through the sheer scale and investment to continually improve the NZ herd," he says.

Appointed as LIC senior breeding advisor, David holds a master's in animal breeding and genetics from Edinburgh University, and a bachelor's degree from UCD's school of agriculture.

David can be contacted on **0879 372 553** or by email on [dpower@liceurope.com](mailto:dpower@liceurope.com)



aspects of agriculture from a young age. Before joining LIC she was working with Westpac New Zealand as a local agribusiness manager, looking after 125 farming clients across dairy, sheep, beef and horticulture.

Prior to this Rachel was a FSM for LIC in New Zealand. She has a sound understanding and experience in financial reporting, account analysis and budgeting, with direct on farm experience, and particular knowledge of the dairy sector. Rachael describes the dairy sector as now increasingly



diversified, and says working within it has provided her with the chance to learn and experience from the opportunities and difficulties the industry offers.

"I have passion for cows, herd improvement and community engagement' and I'm looking forward to learning more about the UK industry while working alongside farmers to help them towards their goals.

Rachael can be contacted on **07966 090848** or by email on [rverhaegh@liceurope.com](mailto:rverhaegh@liceurope.com)

## Rachael Verhaegh

Farm Solutions Manager for Scotland, NE England, Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cumbria.

Rachael grew up on a farm and says she has always been passionate about dairy, being involved in most

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