

Meet the Farmer



Rosey Dunn produces beef and lamb in partnership with her husband Alisdair and their son James on a 160 - acre farm at Stockton-on-the-Forest, near York. They have 180 beef cattle and 120 Suffolk Cross sheep, and they also grow wheat and barley - mainly to use as feed for the animals in winter.

Rosey is proud to be a Red Tractor farmer, and the farm is inspected each year to ensure that Red Tractor environmental and animal welfare standards are being met.

She is actively involved in the National Farmers' Union, and is the first woman to be elected to its national governance council.

How did you get involved in farming?

I used to spend a lot of time helping out on my uncle's farm at weekends and in the school holidays. I loved helping to feed the cattle, going to market and riding in the trailer behind the tractor.

My first proper job after leaving school was as a tractor driver on another local farm. That's where I met Alisdair, who was the farm manager there. After a couple of years renting a small farm in Cambridgeshire together, we gained a farm tenancy back home in Yorkshire where we've been farming for the past 20 years.

Farming's a family business for you, so who does what?

I buy and sell the livestock, do the accounts and keep the records up to date. Alisdair does the cropping, so he decides what we're going to grow and where. James mainly works on a different farm so that he can widen his experience, but we've made him a partner in the family farm and he takes a particular interest in our livestock breeding programme.

Crop rotation is an important part of your approach to farming - what's that all about?

We have 50 acres of permanent grass that are always used for grazing but we rotate the rest of the land between cereal growing and grass on a three-year or five-year cycle. Rotation helps keep our animals healthy and happy because you can control parasites better if your livestock don't stay in the same field for too long. It's also good for keeping the soil fertile because the nutrients that our cereal crops take out are put back by sheep and cattle manure and by the ability of grass to absorb nitrogen from the air around it.

What does being a Red Tractor farmer mean to you?

The Red Tractor is a fantastic tool for farmers when we're talking to the public about how their food is produced. The logo is synonymous with quality home-produced food that guarantees high animal welfare and environmental standards, so it's great to be able simply to tell people to look out for the Red Tractor and help support our farmers.

Working to the Red Tractor standards really keeps us on our toes. Being inspected means you have to address all the legal requirements and more besides.

Animal welfare is particularly important. People might be surprised about how much legislation there is relating to the keeping of animals, and the Red Tractor standards reinforce that. We're always at pains to make sure our cattle get the best of everything we can give them - plenty of room and bedding, plenty to eat and drink.

When it comes to the environment there are standards that require us to protect wildlife and avoid polluting streams. Although we don't have to by law, we've got a six-metre border around all our cereal fields in which we grow a grass and wildflower mix to support a variety of wildlife such as butterflies, birds and small mammals.