



Home Farm

WE SPOKE TO ADAM DUGUID AT HOME FARM TO HEAR ABOUT THE GENERATIONS OF DAIRY FARMING THAT HAVE SEEN HOME FARM GROW AND EVOLVE, AND HOW HIS FAMILY ARE FINDING SUCCESS IN THE MODERN WORLD OF DAIRY FARMING.

Farm Facts

Farm type:	Mixed, Dairy & Arable
Farm size:	1880 acres in total (150 grazing land + 1730 mixed crop)
Employees:	12 FT staff, 5-10 PT staff dep. on season across dairy/arable
Tenure:	Owner Occupied
County/region:	Caenby Corner, Lincolnshire
Soil type:	Predominantly clay loam
Key Farming Practices:	Mob Grazing
Breed:	Holstein x Norwegian Red x Montbéliarde
Milking herd:	380
Followers:	100
Avrg yld/cow:	9,000L
Total annual production	3.1 million litres
Annual sales of RDM:	30,000L
Milk selling price:	£1.30 per litre
Dairy products sold:	Raw Milk & Raw Milk Drinks



Raw Milk Producers Association

My grandfather acquired the tenancy of the Norton Place estate in 1955 and purchased it a few years later in 1960. My grandfather didn't enjoy it for long, dying in 1969. My father took over at the tender age of 28. He ran the business until gradually retiring from 2010, sadly dying himself last year. All of this time cows have been milked at Home Farm. In fact, there was an existing dairy there in 1955 when my grandfather arrived. A local historian told me once that the original name for the area at Caenby Corner was Herdwick, which meant "place of the dairy herd", so it is likely that cows have been milked here since the Middle Ages.

The herd was originally British Friesian until it was converted to Holsteins in the 1980s. The system my father ran was quite intensive. Cows were fed a high ration diet, milked three times every day and housed year-round. I felt this system was fundamentally unsustainable in all senses of the word – on the animals, on the environment, and on the staff. And it wasn't delivering a profit either. So, we hatched a plan with our dairy consultant to move the farm to a lower input and output system, using a three-way Holstein, Montbéliarde, and Norwegian Red Cross. The cross combines the strengths of each breed such as health, longevity, and fertility. As expected, our average milk yield has decreased but the costs of production have been reduced as our cows can be sustained on reduced dry matter and increased grazing. We now graze the entire dairy herd so the cows are out as they should be with sunshine on their backs in the summer. We are still in the early stages of the cross so it will take some years to reach the true end result but it has been a positive change for us so far.

We no longer calve year round, but have moved to an autumn block calving system which gives the animals and staff a rest in the summer when the herd is grazing and milk output are low, and gives us the highest volume of milk in the autumn when national supply is traditionally at its lowest ebb. We have invested in a new twin 24/24 herringbone parlour which (at least in theory!) is meant to milk 200 cows per hour and which has vastly improved the milking system, ensuring that the cows are not standing around for lengthy periods and also that staff can finish the job more quickly.

The cows are milked twice a day with each milking beginning at around 4am and 2pm. They are pre-dipped with Progiene Dual Defence and wiped off with separate

paper towels for each cow. The cows are then stripped out, milked and post dipped with the same dip before leaving the parlour. This routine is followed during both morning and afternoon milking to ensure milk quality and cleanliness. This also means that any issues are picked up and dealt with promptly which helps to maintain good test results. As all of our cows are prepared to the standard for raw milk supply it means we can fill our raw milk tank at any time during milking.

As part of the new system, we started to sell raw milk off the farm in 2017, securing an RPA grant for the Czech-made Milkbot vending machine – although Brexit delayed us for a year. Since then, we have been overwhelmed by the positive response. No doubt we benefit from our excellent location on the A15 but it has been a very positive development. We have connected with end consumers for the first time and perhaps also been made aware of the uniqueness and the desirability of the food we produce. It is no longer simply a commodity. When starting out and even now occasionally there was some concern about the safety of raw milk. By speaking to individuals directly we have been able to educate them about the rigorous testing involved and the steps we take to ensure the milk is completely safe for consumption.

Since grazing, our butterfats and protein levels have increased significantly to average well over 4% in the case of butterfat and usually 3.5% protein. Our hygiene routine in the parlour is meticulous and Glyn the principal milker takes great pride and care in ensuring the rock bottom bactoscan and cellcount figures which we now enjoy. When the cows are housed in the winter months they are bedded on lovely deep mattresses with a dusting of sawdust to keep them dry. We feed them on a mixture of homegrown maize and grass silage and crimped corn with a small helping of other purchased proteins.



The milk vending machine is situated in what we called the Milk Shed and is filled daily, and any unsold milk goes to the calves. As its popularity has grown we have added a machine selling coffees, hot chocolates, and milkshakes. Our coffee is supplied by 77 Coffee Co, a small, local business that creates and packages unique blends. A smart wooden bench has been fitted outside so that visitors can enjoy a moment of peace on their journey. Who knows what future additions will be added on site, but we have ambitions for the future. As we sell via a vending machine it allows us to be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week which is more convenient for customers. 1 and 2 litre plastic bottles are provided free of charge but customers are welcome to bring their own reusable bottles if they wish.

For anyone wishing to begin selling raw milk we would highly recommend developing a good social media base. Social media allows us to connect with new and existing customers via posts and direct messages. It gives us the opportunity to educate, communicate and hopefully interest people in the lifestyle of dairy farming. We are able to be transparent which is incredibly important to us and beneficial to the industry as a whole. It is rewarding having a personal connection with customers which without the Milk Shed wouldn't exist.