

MIXED FARMERS OF THE YEAR



Wiltshire farmers Nick and Lucy Tyler, who run a 850ha mixed dairy, beef and arable farm on the Wiltshire Downs, have been crowned Mixed Farmers of the Year.

The husband and wife's dedication to educating schoolchildren about UK agriculture and unique marketing strategies is a credit to the industry. Their mission is clear: to enhance the health and welfare of animals to produce quality food, all while putting sustainability and marketing at the core of their business.

Smart integration

The couple aim to "smartly integrate" all three of their enterprises. The dairy consists of 500 Holstein-Friesian cows, producing an average 9,490 litres a cow a year. They have worked hard to obtain a Muller M&S milk contract, reaching the M&S Milk Pledge Plus Dairy Scheme standards and are now RSPCA assured.

The beef enterprise comprises 300 Wagyu-cross beef cattle, which are home-bred from the dairy herd. Beef is marketed in-house under the farm's own brand, Kingsplay Wagyu, which has helped to secure substantial premiums. Close partnerships with farm shops in the south of England have been formed, enabling them to achieve a 35% premium on standard beef prices. They have also embarked on a joint venture with a salami company to add value to lower-quality meat cuts, achieving as much as a 400% premium.

Social media platforms are used to market their produce. The pair are even running a marketing campaign #WagyuWednesday, sharing recipe videos to drive engagement.

The arable enterprise includes 400ha of combinable winter wheat and spring barley, 250ha of grassland and 175ha of forage crops such as maize and wholecrop. About 40% of combinable crops are used as animal feed on farm, helping to reduce exposure to volatile feed markets and allowing them to achieve a concentrate feed cost below 10p/litre for the dairy. All starch in the animal rations post-weaning is home-grown, which is something the pair are extremely proud of.

The arable operation changed five years ago, when a farm employee approached Nick and Lucy about starting his own contracting business. The couple were keen to help him achieve his dream and came to an agreement where he is responsible for field operations.

Community

The farm opened its gates for an “Open Farm Sunday Fortnight” this year and they are now building an on-site classroom. The couple have also launched a scheme involving two local primary schools, where every pupil visits the farm each year. They intend to roll this out to a further two to three schools by September 2025.

The farm runs a number of environmental schemes, ensuring at least 5% of the land farmed is managed as habitat for farmland birds and pollinators. An agroforestry project with the Woodland Trust is under way, planting a range of trees, including walnuts this autumn.

WINNING WAYS

- Smart integration of dairy unit, Wagyu-cross beef cattle and arable enterprises
- Excellent focus on finding niche Wagyu beef market and creating own-brand label
- Strong ability to market farm produce to maximise returns
- Brilliant commitment and enthusiasm to educating young children about farming

WHAT THE JUDGES SAY

It is clear to see the passion for Nick and Lucy’s farming operations and their drive to market produce efficiently. The work Lucy is doing to bring schoolchildren onto the farm and spread the farming message is truly dedicated.

FARM FACTS

- 850ha mixed dairy, beef and arable farm on the Wiltshire Downs, with focus on maximising animal welfare
- Cropping includes 400ha combinable crops, 250ha grassland and 175ha other forage
- Selling milk to Muller M&S and marketing beef cattle under own-brand label

Developed own-brand Wagyu beef brand

FINALISTS

Jack Bosworth Spains Hall Farm, Essex

The Speed family Briddicott Farm, Somerset

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