



PRISM 2030 FARMER:

JAMES TURNER

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In autumn 2022, Farm Manager, James Turner added 300 cattle to the arable enterprise at Downton Hall, Shropshire, with the aim of improving pastures, eliminating nitrogen use, and efficiently producing grass fed, low carbon beef for ABP. It is hoped that longer term, biodiversity, water and soil health will benefit from the various changes being made.

Angus sired calves are locally sourced through ABP, and rotationally mob grazed on two-acre, electric fenced paddocks, across 120 acres of permanent pasture and herbal leys, moving to fresh grazing each morning. James keenly explains why he chose this system, "Rotational grazing ensures cattle get a balanced diet, the grass performs better than if we set stocked it, and livestock grow well.

We planted species-rich herbal leys to help cattle finish at a good spec, in good time, all from grazing, without compromising our environmental footprint by growing species less reliant on fertiliser; this helps one of our Harper Adams' recommendations - eliminating fertiliser use. We'll monitor what cattle eat and adjust the seed mix to get the best feed quality.

"Salt licks are always available, and cattle are given a bespoke bolus containing selenium, copper, iodine and cobalt to support health.

The farm is 800 meters above sea level, so cattle are housed during winter and fed on a mix of home-grown peas, barley and silage. Heifers and steers are separated and fed slightly different diets.

Short rotation coppice grown on the farm, is ramial chipped and incorporated with straw for bedding and it is hoped that, when applied as farmyard manure, it will support soil microbes which will improve soil diversity, health and productivity.

Young cattle are weighed monthly as they pass through yards, a low stress system, allowing animal health and performance monitoring without affecting growth.

Another of the farm's Harper Adams' recommendations, is to finish cattle as early as possible, James is therefore aiming to send heifers at 280kg/DW and steers at 300kg/DW, between 18 and 20 months, weighing more regularly as they near these targets. He will learn in early 2024, if this is achievable from this system, making necessary adjustments as required.

ABP Ellesmere is just over an hour away from his farm, minimising animal stress and transport miles to slaughter, all supporting low carbon beef production.