



**FARMING**  
connect  
cyswllt  
**FFERMIO**

# Farming Connect Management Exchange

Funded through the Knowledge Transfer, Innovation and Advisory Service programme under the Welsh Government Rural Communities – Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020

Eurig Jenkins

Sweden, Denmark & Ireland

All things dairy

28<sup>th</sup> November – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017

10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> January 2018

## 1 Background

I wanted to see different systems to what we use at home. At home, I run a 400 cow dairy herd on a 64 day spring block calving system. We also aim to graze cows on an extended rotational grazing system. I was eager to see as much as possible within the dairy sector in my chosen countries.

## 2 Itinerary

In November I flew out to Gothenburg, Sweden to visit Losin and Brigitta Borkesson, contacts I had acquired through a friend. They proved to be great hosts and I stayed with them for a week, carrying out one milking a day in exchange for my stay. The core business was milking a 60 cow Holstein herd in a relatively new setup on the outskirts of Gotheburg. As there was a bus stop located just outside the farm gate with 4 buses an hour passing through, they took advantage of the opportunity to sell raw milk from a self-service vending machine which was open 5am-10pm 365 days a year. They also ran a snow plough and gritting business as well as grass and verge trimming during the summer months, with both tractor drivers working approximately 2500 hours a year.

From here I visited numerous farms from 40 to 900 cow units and a mixture of rented, government owned and private farms. The majority of the farms grew their own corn which they fed back to the cows and because of this, most farms didn't know how much cake they fed their cows. They only purchase corn to be fed in the parlour. Most of the cows were also fully housed for 7+



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

months of the year. In essence, they were arable farmers who fed their own animals which in turn produced a lot of milk.

For my second part of the trip I travelled by ferry to Denmark where I stayed with Morten Mejlvang and his family. He ran one of the best financially performing farms in the country and I was fortunate enough to accompany him to a meeting with his accountant during the second day. At the end of the meeting I asked his accountant if Morten was a typical farmer and his reply was definitely not. As I was eager to learn more, they both explained further in English and a few key points stood out to me:

- The scale of the business was a 370 block calving herd
- Crossbred cows with impressive feed to milk conversion
- Cow peak yield and lifetime production of milks solids were in the top 5% in the country
- Expenses were very low all round e.g. vet, feed, machinery & contracts
- The only expense that was higher than average was paid labour but they believed that good labour had a direct effect on cow welfare, condition and overall farm cleanliness which lead to a sustainable future for the business

I then travelled south to visit Jens and Soren Madsen who ran a 600 cow block calving Jersey herd. Cows were milked 3 times a day and given 6 litres of water a day. Cows reached an optimum 28% DM diet all year-round and achieved a 900l herd average, which when converted back to standard litres equates to 11,247 litres.

By the time I arrived home I had seen over 4,000 milking cows and youngstock but the most enjoyable part was engaging with the host families and being proud of what I do and achieve at home.

I also attended the Positive Farming Conference in Ireland in January. The conference was very much geared towards people who are passionate about grazing cows. The calibre of speakers was excellent and as a result has prompted us to sort out succession on our own farm and now all family members have received clarity about every aspect. People attend this conference because they want to be there!

### 3 Next Steps

The main thing I learnt from the trip was: Water = Milk = Profit. As a result of the trip, I intend to improve the water quality on my farm which will hopefully increase cow consumption and produce more milk. The rearing of youngstock is often overlooked as they tend to receive the worst feed all year round but feeding better quality food as youngstock should increase the lifetime production of that animal.

### 4 Key Messages to the industry

1. The quality of drinking water for livestock is often overlooked
2. Mix with positive, likeminded people
3. Managing staff on larger units is more important than personally managing the cows yourself
4. Learning from other people's mistakes is a positive thing
5. Travel while you can
6. Don't be afraid to ask questions

