

Herefords and Limfords established at Nether Hall



Clipston 1 President P6

With a farm able to grow plenty of grass, a Cumbrian farmer has established a pedigree Hereford herd to run alongside his established Limousin herd, and using the two to produce Limford beef suckler heifers as Neil Ryder found out.

Limford calves have made their debut on a Cumbrian farm and, it is hoped, will have real potential as top quality commercial beef suckler dams. The cross, a Hereford bull on a Limousin female, is being tried by David and Maggie Kelly after they set up a new pedigree Hereford herd to run alongside their established pedigree Limousin herd.

"We knew that the Hereford was a successful cross on the Simmental as well as some other beef breeds, and thought it well worth trying on some of our bottom end Limousin heifers and cows.

"The hope is to produce a cross bred suckler dam that has the ability of the Hereford to be fed cheaply off grass and be easy to care for, with the beefing ability of the Limousin and will be



David and Maggie Kelly in front of Solpoll 1 Kyle (P) and Ervie Achiever 1462 (H)

cheaper to feed. Providing all goes to plan, we will be using Limfords in our own commercial suckler herd as well as having some for sale," said Mr Kelly.

A former civil engineering contractor, Mr Kelly came to Nether Hall, Mansergh, Kirkby Lonsdale 17 years ago. He married Maggie who was brought up on, and farmed a local dairy farm 11 years ago, David has two children, student Harriet who has a keen interest in art, especially agricultural related subjects, and her younger brother, John, who hopes for a career outside farming. The farm has one full-time employee, Patrick Booth.

The subsequent purchase of neighbouring farms has brought the total area farmed to about 700 acres. The land, which drops down to the River Lune, includes everything from heavy to light gravelly soils. The farm is all down to permanent grass which has been improved by slot seeding.

Initially the farm carried a mix of livestock enterprises including a mixed commercial suckler herd made up of Limousin and





Belgian Blue crossed cows served with the Limousin bull, a North Country Cheviot sheep flock and some pigs. The sheep have now gone, and the cattle numbers have increased, Nether Hall is now a pure cattle enterprise.

Currently there are about 500 cattle on the farm including 150 Pedigree Limousin breeding cows, 50 Pedigree Herefords and 100 commercial suckler cows served by the bull or AI this year. Most of our breeding bulls are sold at home, and bullocks are sold as stores at about 18 months of age. The farm is moving towards all spring calving to make the best use of grass.

Impressed by the Limousin both as a terminal beef sire and the Limousin cross suckler cows in their herd the Kelly's bought a few pedigree Limousin cows which proved the foundation of their successful Netherhall Limousin herd. They also established a small Belgian Blue (now British Blue) herd selling bulls up to 17,000gns, and used the British Blue bulls on their bottom end Limousins selling their progeny for breeding.

Mrs Kelly says: "The Limousin gave us good quality carcasses, were selling well at the time and were an attractive breed. Also they are very good commercial cattle. We also tried using the Belgian Blue bull on Limousin cows which was very successful.

She says: "We went to New Zealand for a month's holiday two years ago and farmers being farmers we visited some New Zealand farms including Haldon Station in South Island which runs a herd of Herefords on an extensive grassland system.

"We were impressed by the ease of management, easy calving and low costs involved including being able to finish cattle off grass. The New Zealanders told us that Australia had some



fantastic Hereford genetics and after returning home we trawled the internet and came across Wirruna Poll Herefords in New South Wales. We liked their philosophy and we liked their cows. When Ian Locke, the breeder, was in England he came to see us, and we have since bought and implanted embryos from them which will be born in November 2014.

Mr Kelly says: "One thing this farm is very good at is growing grass, and we need to make full use of it, this is where we see the Herefords role, we have to be thinking about the cost of production, and that is why we are moving towards a spring calving herd, serving our bottom end Limousins with the Hereford instead of the Blue will produce good quality easy fleshing females with lots of milk that will make great mothers, and this is where we see our Limfords excelling." "It makes sense to us to have hardy cattle that make full use of our grass, are easy to manage and produce quality calves that are produced cheaply. There is also growing demand from major retailers for Hereford beef so we decided to set up our own pedigree and commercial herd.

"We talked to John Douglas and visited his Ervie herd near Stranraer, we liked his cattle and became interested in Line 1 Herefords, we bought 16 of his Autumn calving cows and 30 yearling heifers to give us a start. We made contact with Jack Holden in Montana USA, and have imported embryos from Holden Herefords which are Horned as we intend to run a Horned and Poll herd.

"We also went over to Northern Ireland to Solpoll Herefords after seeing pictures of a cow they had sold that we really liked, there



we saw the cow Stella and thought she was fantastic we were able to buy her with heifer calf at foot, and in-calf subsequently giving us another heifer. We are now planning to flush her.

“For bulls we have an Ervie bull, Ervie L1 Achiever 91149H AI ET a Line 1 sire, a bull Clipston 1 President P6 ,a young Solpoll bull Solpoll 1 Kyle and a young Ervie bull by an L1 sire Ervie Achiever 1462 .

Two factors that are absolutely paramount for all cattle at Nether Hall are high health status and good temperament.

Mr Kelly says: “We are in the SAC Premium Health Scheme and are accredited free of Johnes disease testing annually, we test every calf as it is born for BVD with tags and in two years have never had a positive, we vaccinate for BVD and Leptospirosis and vaccinate the cows for IBR. We routinely fluke and worm on the farm, and we are in a four year TB testing parish.

“Simply we do not bring in any cattle unless they have come direct from other high health herds. Double fencing is also erected along any of our boundaries where our stock could come into contact with neighbours’ animals.

Temperament and docility are essential, “Safety and ease of handling cattle is vitally important. Any animal, of whatever



Limford calf at 5 weeks of age



Ervie L1 Achiever 91149H (DH) AI ET

breed or cross, that shows temperament issues, however good in other ways, goes for slaughter. Welfare is also a priority with cows in-wintered

in cubicles with mattresses making them as comfortable as possible and fed a silage and straw based diet.

Looking forward Mr Kelly says: “We will always be first and foremost a commercial farm with both crossbred and pedigree stock. The mix will be about 100 Hereford breeding cows run on a low cost grass based system, about 150 Limousin breeding cows 100 crossbred sucklers, including Limfords.

Most of the calves out of the Pedigree Limousins and Herefords if not retained will be sold as High Herd Health breeding heifers and stock bulls, commercial heifer calves including Limfords will be sold as High Herd Health suckler heifers and recipients. Some will continue to be sold as stores but we will be looking to finish a proportion of the Hereford calves off grass. We also see dairy farmers as an important market for our Hereford bulls to use on their heifers and cows as we are aiming to breed short gestation, easy calving bulls.

“ I believe far too much attention has been given to big back ends in beef cattle when the more valuable cuts are in the loin so length is important. However we would like to make our Herefords just a little squarer in type.