

## Andrew Crow - Improver

Andrew Crow farms approximately 520 ha at Cherrington Farm, near Newport in Shropshire. It consists of 256 ha of permanent pasture, 48 ha of grass leys with the remaining ground used for arable crops.

The farm is split into two distinctive blocks, 200 ha of which is farmed on Wilderley Hill at 396 metres above sea level with an annual rainfall of 60 inches. The remainder is farmed at Cherrington, at a height of 61 metres above sea level and a rainfall of 32 inches.

Being located in a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ) and part of a ten-year Higher Level Stewardship Scheme restricts certain grazing practices and the ability to improve ground.

The current suckler herd, which is made up mostly of Stabilisers, includes 93 spring-calving cows and 24 autumn-calving cows.

The spring-calving herd is housed before Christmas and turned out after calving in April to Wilderley Hill. Autumn calving occurs outdoors with cows and calves being out-wintered. The autumn-born calves are housed at 12 months of age for finishing at 16 months on a diet of silage, barley and protein balancer. The majority of spring-born animals are finished on grass at 18 months, after being out-wintered in their first year. Andrew aims to put all finished stock through the butchery part of his business - Cherrington Butchers.

The cattle are rotated slowly around the farm, utilising some of the poorer quality swards during the summer months. The finishing stock are more intensively grazed on the short term leys at Cherrington. Furthermore, if being out-wintered, cattle are strip grazed on forage rye, rape and stubble turnips.

Andrew is aiming to increase suckler cow numbers from the current levels to 300, with an autumn and a spring-calving herd each numbering 150 animals.

Key targets include:

- Improve grass growth through rotational grazing
- Finish stock on forage alone
- Perfect a system that relies on some out-wintering to reduce costs

Andrew has been paired with mentor Graham Parks.



*Andrew Crow*

## Graham Parks—Mentor

Graham Parks rents 83 ha at Pastures Farm, Macclesfield, where he rears and finishes 200 dairy-cross beef calves each year. He supplies them to Scotbeef and Dunbia at 260-270kg for heifers and 330 kg for steers.

The aim is to finish the cattle at 24-30 months of age on a grass-based system. The calves are purchased at three weeks of age and are mostly Aberdeen Angus and Shorthorn crosses. 150 are purchased in March and April and 50 purchased in the autumn. Graham then rears and weans the calves before they are then sent out to grass.

He uses rotational grazing through the season, with cattle being moved every two to four days. He also grows 13 ha of maize, with the crop being used to out-winter the cattle on the stubbles. To aid finishing through the winter, Graham feeds the maize with brewer's grains and silage.

Graham's key focus is to maintain a low-cost system that also has a low labour input, therefore allowing him to work off farm.

