

How pasture feeding works on my farm

Chris Jones, Woodland Valley Farm, Cornwall

Chris farms in the heart of Cornwall with his wife Janet. They run an organic farm and sell their beef and pork locally.

Chris is an original founder member of the [Pasture Fed Livestock Association \(PFLA\)](#).

He grazes his Limousin x Aberdeen Angus cattle on herbal leys. This was a decision he made in 2009 when the rainfall made harvesting cereals more challenging. Chris did his research and decided to work with the situation, rather than against it.



The leys

The leys consist of plantain, clover, yarrow, chicory, cockfoot, festulolium, timothy, ryegrass and other legumes and herbs. He chose a really diverse ley rather than just grass varieties and has had good results.

The cattle are grazed on pasture on a rotational system until early December. Chris has a strip grazing system and moves the fence back every three days. The grazing interval on the paddocks until the cattle are housed is up to 90 days in the winter.



The herbal leys have also had a positive effect on the soil structure. Chicory roots lateral roots can be seen going down at least 60cm when a hole is dug.

Chris extends the life of the pasture for as long as possible. He does still plough to re-establish a ley, but this is only as a last resort.

The cattle have always been outwintered, but following a few bad years Chris made the decision to save the pasture and house the cattle over the winter period. He produced hay and will use the manure, but he has had to spend money on straw.

Cattle

The beef cattle are pasture fed for life and finished from 20 -24 months of age, with steers weighing around 320kg deadweight at 22 months of age.

The liveweight gain for steers is about 1.1kg per day and 0.8kg per day for heifers.

In order to hit the market at the right time, Chris aims for calves to be born early in the season.

Chris is really focussed on the end market and being efficient. Because of his approach, the feedback he receives is always good with the size, conformation and fat content all described as excellent.

For more information read the BRP manual

[Improving pasture for Better Returns](#)