

# Livestock Farming in Nidderdale AONB

AONB



*Friesian cows are most commonly kept dairy breed.*

## Dairy Farming

In the more easterly areas of Nidderdale AONB where the land is lower lying a number of farmers are dairy farmers. Dairy farmers keep herds of milking cows to collect milk from daily. The most common breed of cow kept is Friesian, which are the large black and white cows you often see on milk cartons and adverts for milk.

The farmer grazes the cows outside during the spring, summer and autumn months. Grass is the most economic food that farmers can grow and well managed land and herds produce lots of milk from it. Over the winter cows are kept in cowsheds and fed on silage. Silage is “pickled grass”, it is cut from the fields in summer and either made into bails or put in a designated area. Both ways it is covered in plastic and the air kept away from it. Other foods may be used alongside silage such as cereals.

Cows are usually milked twice a day (sometimes three times). Milk production can only occur when a cow has calved. Calves stay with their mothers for a few days before being transferred to the calf unit. The cow continues to produce milk, which is gathered using specialist equipment in the parlour. The milking parlour must be kept very clean. The milk is stored in a special refrigerated tank before being collected and taken to the processing plant. The calves are reared and sold on for beef production or kept to replenish the herd.



T Burrey

*Making sure the dairy is clean.*

The land owned by dairy farmers is normally managed more intensively for grass production, including using fertilisers or manures to enrich the soil. The wildlife value of these fields is limited compared to land managed as hay meadows.

## Beef Cattle

These are cattle kept in the pasture fields of the AONB. There are many different breeds and each one has different traits, which appeal to the farmers. The cattle are kept inside for 5 or 6 months and fed on silage and other supplementary feeds made from cereals. In summer they feed on the lush grass of the fields and become fit and healthy for market. Each animal has its own passport so that its history is known.



E Moss

*A suckler cow with its calf.*

## Sheep

Sheep are kept on numerous farms in the AONB. A hardy animal, they are able to live on the moors and open fields. Sheep are farmed for their meat products and wool.



Spring lambs

Lambs are generally born in early spring but it all depends on the climate and weather conditions, further north it may be slightly later. Most farmers allow the female sheep, ewes, to lamb out in the field, but the shepherd closely monitors them. This is to ensure any difficulties are spotted and humans can intervene to save the lambs and sheep. Sometimes a ewe may have insufficient milk to feed all her lambs or the lamb is rejected. In this case the farmer will feed the lambs with special milk through a bottle with a teat and ensure they grow up healthy.



The shepherd leading his flock across the moor.



The flock being brought down from the hills for shearing.

The lambs grow quite quickly on their mothers' milk and can be seen frolicking around the fields. Moorland sheep are brought down from the moors for lambing and return as the lambs increase in strength and size.



Young sheep being shown for sale at market.

July is sheep shearing time. Shearing not only removes the bulk of the thick wool to make the animals more comfortable in the summer sun, but also the fleece is a commodity for the farmer to sell.

When the lambs are old enough they go to market to be sold. Some of them may be breeding stock and go on to have lambs, others (normally the male lambs) will be fattened up for their meat.