



The Waitrose farm *Leckford Estate*

Leckford Estate



Farmer: Andrew Ferguson

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Website: www.leckfordestate.co.uk

The Leckford Estate runs to 4,000 acres, some two miles north of Stockbridge in Hampshire. The Estate is part of the John Lewis Partnership having been purchased by John Spedan Lewis, the founder, in 1929. The Estate incorporates a commercial farm as well as a Farm Shop and Café, Longstock Park Nursery, Longstock Park Water Gardens and other leisure facilities for use by John Lewis Partnership staff. In August 2001, the Estate became part of Waitrose (food stores of the John Lewis Partnership) and the farm produces food for its 300-plus stores either under the Leckford Estate brand or through the Waitrose supply chain. We are also LEAF Marque certified.



The Farm

Occupying 4,000 acres astride the River Test between Andover and Stockbridge in Hampshire, the Leckford Estate produces arable crops, apples, pears, grapes, milk and mushrooms. It has an extensive programme of environmental management based around Integrated Farm Management principles and the protection of key habitats such as wetland meadows and chalk downland.

Crops for food

Leckford Farm follows Integrated Farm Management principles to produce a wide range of crops. Apples and pears, from its 30 acre fruit farm, are sold to Waitrose with some also sold through the Farm Shop as well as processed into fruit juice (and sometimes cider). An 11 acre vineyard, planted in 2009, produces 25,000-35,000 bottles of Leckford Estate sparkling wine each year. A purpose-built mushroom farm produces 20-26 tonnes of brown/chestnut mushrooms each week for sale through Waitrose stores. Wheat produced on the Estate is milled, bagged and retailed through Waitrose as Leckford Estate branded flour. Likewise, we press and bottle our own rapeseed on the Estate for sale as cold-pressed rapeseed oil through Waitrose and our Farm Shop.



Livestock

The Estate has a dairy herd of over 550 Holstein Friesians and is one of around 50 dedicated dairy farmers supplying milk into Waitrose (the 'Waitrose Dairy Farmers'). Use is made of leguminous forage crops (clover and Lucerne) on the Estate to reduce inputs of artificial fertiliser and to increase the quality of the dairy cow rations. Organic cows' and conventional goats' milk is taken in from other selected farms, pasteurised and bottled on the Estate for Waitrose. The Estate is also home to 12,000 free-range laying hens, managed by Stonegate, egg suppliers to Waitrose.

Community

The Estate employs 150 'Partners' (employees of the John Lewis Partnership), many of whom live on or nearby the Estate and who contribute to the local economy as well as to the local communities. Indeed, Estate Partners are encouraged to be active in the local communities. The Estate donates to charities through a number of approaches, including the Waitrose 'Community Matters' scheme. The Estate takes part in LEAF Open Farm Sunday each June.

Conservation

The Leckford Estate has a long tradition of care and respect for wildlife and conservation. It has a wealth of varied habitats including the River Test, water meadows, ancient grass downland and woodland, with many SSSIs and a substantial Environmental Stewardship Agreement. Over recent years, there has been extensive work done on woodland management, hedge-planting and grassland regeneration. In addition, the Estate has a small retail nursery noted for its National Collections of Buddleja and Clematis viticella selling quality plants to the public.

Visits

As a LEAF Demonstration Farm, we want to share what we are doing with others. Visits take place throughout the year and are organised through the LEAF office.



About LEAF Demonstration Farms

LEAF Demonstration Farms are commercial farms, which show the beneficial practices of Integrated Farm Management (IFM) to a broad range of audiences, through organised visits. They communicate an understanding of IFM in order to encourage uptake by farmers, support from the industry and political awareness of sustainable food and farming. For more information, visit www.leafuk.org.

