

Renner Farming



Farmer: John Renner

Address: North Bellshill Farm, Belford, Northumberland, NE70 7HP

North Bellshill and Amerside Hill are mixed farms located between Berwick-upon-Tweed and Alnwick, bordering the edge of the spectacular Northumberland National Park. The farms extend to 202 hectares and focus on livestock farming including a herd of Aberdeen Angus suckler cows and Texel and Suffolk ewes.



The Farm

My family have farmed in this area for over five hundred years and a strong tradition of combining environmental care with sound, practical farming runs right through the business. The 202 hectare farms are mixed livestock farms including an expanding herd of Aberdeen Angus suckler cows and Texel and Suffolk cross ewes.

Livestock

Good record keeping is central to the livestock enterprise. A flock and herd health plan was set up a couple of years ago in conjunction with the vet. This simple management calendar helps to address any health problems and identify potential problem areas. The sheep graze the permanent pasture and are brought indoors four weeks prior to lambing to a well ventilated shed where they have plenty of access to light and space. The sheep are fed according to their requirements and the number of lambs they carry, using information from scanning. The ewes are split up into lambing groups; singles, twins and triplets and great care is taken to ensure there is more adequate feeding area for each ewe. The cow herd is ever expanding and is made up of a mixture of traditional breeds. All replacements are home bred and the terminal sires are chosen on their EBV's, ease of calving being most important. Some of our prime lambs are sold to local restaurants and we are always seeking out other local markets. We run a fully traceable system and are FABBL and LEAF Marque certified.



Soil management and Fertility

Soil management and fertility is managed very carefully at Amerside Hill Farm with management techniques tailored to individual fields and rotations. Non-inversion tillage techniques are used wherever possible to maintain soil structure. Organic matter additions are also very important and the introduction of grass leys into the rotation has further encouraged the build-up of organic matter.

Conservation

The farm has conducted a range of positive environmental management projects under the countryside stewardship scheme including hedgerow regeneration, stonewalling and creation of an area of no nitrogen and limited grazing to provide a better balance of wildlife habitats. Grass margins have been established around all fields which act as a buffer preventing spray drift reaching hedge bottoms whilst providing feeding and hunting grounds for birds, small mammals and insects. Hedges are managed sensitively and cutting is carried out in rotation and outside the nesting season. Grey partridges, barn owls and lapwings are regular visitors to the farm and habitats are managed to ensure their continued survival. Great attention is given to resource protection and over six hectares of stream and river bank have been fenced off and planted with traditional woodland. As well as protecting watercourses, these also create valuable wildlife corridors and diverse habitats.

Community

As an industry, we need to speak out about what we do to produce wholesome food as well as protect the environment. We have opened an education room on the farm and are involved in a number of learning initiatives with local schools. We look forward to welcoming you to North Bellshill and Amerside Hill and telling you more about how we are linking the environment and farming.

Visits

We have been a LEAF Demonstration Farm since 2005 and regularly host visits to a wide range of interested audiences both out in the field and in their tailor made on site classroom. To book a visit please contact 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.

