



## SUCCESS WITH BEEF FINISHING



**James Warwick has been working hard to bring down the age at first calving in his suckler herd and speed up bull finishing times.**

Originally from Cambridgeshire, James relocated to Bude, North Cornwall, nine years ago to farm alongside his grandparents, John and Jan Throssell, who purchased Broompark Farm in 2001.

Recognising the progress he has made, James, 28, recently won the South West Beef Farmer of the Year award, with judges commending the genetic progress and efficiency improvements he has made since taking over the herd.

### ABOUT THE FARM

James runs 30 pedigree South Devon suckler cows plus followers under the Broompark Prefix across 170 acres of grassland. He also keeps a flock of 350 breeding ewes which lamb outdoors for a month from 1st April.

Mule ewes are crossed to Texels to produce flock replacements, which are then mated to Hampshire Downs to produce finished lambs for Dunbia, South Petherwin/M&S.

Last year James doubled suckler numbers, purchasing 15 heifers at various South Devon breeding sales. By supplementing heifers from birth through to post-bulling and feeding top-quality forage, he has reduced age at first calving from three years to two.

This has paid dividends with every heifer put to the bull conceiving since James started bulling heifers younger four years ago.

### FEEDING FOR PERFORMANCE

James has been working closely with myself and Harpers Feeds for the past four years to analyse forage and tailor rations.

*"We have always used Harpers ewe rolls but switched to their cattle feed in 2021 and saw better feed conversion and liveweight gains,"* comments James.

He uses an easy-calving Red Devon on heifers to boost hybrid vigour – an idea inspired by a herd he judged six years ago. Cows continue to be bred to South Devon bulls, with the whole herd calving within a 12-week block from March.

Bull selection focuses on locomotion, functionality and docility – the latter is an important trait given James largely works alone.

Cows are forage-fed year-round, while calves receive creep feed (Harpers 18% Calf Rearing Molassed Mix) shortly after birth. They mob graze 4-5-acre fields with their dams and are shifted weekly. While at grass, calves are achieving impressive daily liveweight gains of 1.6kg, on average. Calves are typically weaned at housing in October at around 350kg liveweight (50% of dam weight).

Post-weaning, bulls remain indoors on 3kg/head/day of 18% Calf Rearing Molassed Mix and quality first-cut silage. First-cut is taken in May and normally averages

11ME and 13% protein. From 12 months of age, they transition to a 14% crude protein maize-based blend, Harpers Premier Beef Molassed Mix, which contains Levucell yeast to support rumen function. The yeast helps manage the starch load and reduces the risk of acidosis.

On that ration, they are fed concentrate ad-lib and can consume up to 10kg freshweight each. Finished bulls are sold to Kepak, Bodmin, killing out at 400-430kg deadweight, with the majority grading U or R with fat covers of 3=.

### FUTURE

Having retained heifers to grow herd numbers, James now plans to resume selling surplus breeding females.

*"In the short-term, I want to improve the overall stamp and consistency of the herd and sell pedigree heifers."*

A major investment towards that goal was the purchase of the multi show champion Grove Sorrel 129 from the Grove dispersal for a breed record of 14,000gns. Sired by Trewint Maverick she is in calf to Woodhayes Homer 5.

The plan is to take embryos from her to fast-track her influence within the herd.

*"I love my cows. I'm very fortunate my cows are my business, but also my hobby with my showing. I get a lot of enjoyment from them."*



## FARM FACTS

- ✓ 170 acres (120 owned and the rest rented), all grass
- ✓ 30 South Devon suckler cows plus followers
- ✓ Sells pedigree breeding bulls
- ✓ Finishing bulls for Kepak, Bodmin
- ✓ 350 breeding ewes.



# HOPE YET FOR IHT REFORM AS CORNISH FARMERS TAKE FIGHT TO WESTMINSTER

**Farmers are being driven to protest to try to make a living from their farm and pass it onto their family without paying the recently imposed 20% inheritance tax.**

Farmers make less than 1% return on their investment, on average, which makes paying this tax almost impossible. A group of Cornish farmers travelled by coach to Westminster to lobby MPs on this issue last month. The bus was sponsored by Harpers Feeds.

We were hosted by our Liberal Democrat MP Ben McGuire, whose staff were very helpful. We first met with the chair of the EFRA Committee, Alistair Carmichael. It is his job, alongside his committee, to oversee the work, or lack of it, of DEFRA. He explained that DEFRA says it wants food production, environmental protection, healthy eating education and climate warming mitigation. The only people in society that can provide all these things are farmers, and yet in 15 months of this administration, we have had no policy announcements or direction.

Instead, the basic payment scheme has been removed, and the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) scheme has been closed. Worst of all, we've been hit with the biggest blow in the form of IHT reform that will make succession very difficult.



Orkney and Shetland MP Mr Carmichael told us about parliamentary procedure. The finance bill, which follows the budget, will go through its first reading with very few Labour MPs voting against it. The next stage is the second reading, at which point the speaker of the house selects several amendments to be voted on.

Getting an amendment placed before the House is our only realistic hope of revising IHT. But an amendment must have cross-party support to have a chance of being selected. We encouraged Mr Carmichael to use his position as EFRA chair to place an amendment as proposed by the CenTax report. CenTax is a tax research centre, which has calculated that the government would raise more revenue if it increased the threshold for IHT to £5million and charged 40% thereafter.

With seven rural labour MPs on his EFRA committee, they might support the amendment and get it through to the second reading. It would then need 80 Labour MPs to vote for it. There are enough rural MPs who know their seat is on the line if they do not support the amendment.

We then went on to meet five of the Cornish MPs, and we left believing they understood more about the impact of these changes, with some willing to support farmers. But exactly how many rebels there will be remains to be seen.

Walking along the front of the Houses of Parliament to the sound of Trelawney blasting out from the boom box was a memorable moment and getting 30 farmers in and out of Westminster tube station was quite challenging!

We all agreed that getting up at 4 am and home at midnight was worth it to show how much we care about our way of life.



## FARMING THOUGHTS

**Congratulations to Mike and Caroline Hawking, runners-up at the British Grassland Society 'Grassland Farmer of the Year', and to James Warwick and Caitlin Hancock, winners at the Southwest Farming Awards 2025.**

The mild autumn has boosted fodder stocks – winter corn is looking well, and plentiful grass is supporting strong store lamb prices. Lamb and beef sectors remain buoyant.

Milk, however, tells a different story: some processors have already slashed prices, and others may follow after Christmas. After two good years, we must plan for lower prices over the next 12–18 months. Don't ignore the situation.

November saw two successful sheep meetings, with two more planned for January—please book early. Our rugby days are a great day out regardless of whether you like rugby or not. As well as offering a break from the farm and meeting friends, they help support local clubs.

As 2025 closes, it's been a strong farming year. When farming thrives, so does the agricultural supply trade, and we've had a record year in both the mill and the store.

Thank you for your continued support. May I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a healthy, prosperous New Year.



# RAW MATERIAL UPDATE

**Over the past few months, soya and rape meal prices have risen sharply by around £50/tonne. Several factors have contributed to this increase.**

The EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR), originally planned for January 2027, was brought forward to January 2026 with a six-month grace period. This added roughly £10/tonne to UK prices due to uncertainty. The EU Council has now voted to delay EUDR by one year and introduce some simplifications, though the EU Parliament must still approve these changes.

Global trade developments have also played a role. The US and China came close to making a trade deal. China lowered tariffs on US soya beans from 23% to 13%, which increased global prices.

Then, the dollar strengthened and the pound weakened, resulting in soya getting more expensive. Rape meal has risen alongside soya due to these global pressures. While soya remains plentiful worldwide and some price easing is possible, it is unlikely that prices will return to previous levels.

Cereals remain plentiful, though have firmed due to the weaker pound making imports more expensive and exports more competitive. Significant barley exports are currently destined for Spain and Portugal. UK wheat plantings are similar to last year at 1.68 million hectares but remain below the 10-year average. Uncropped arable land, including areas under the Sustainable Farming Incentive, has risen by 8% as margins on arable crops remain tight. Notably, global wheat production has exceeded demand for the first time in over five years.

Fibres continue to be scarce. UK sugar beet production is smaller, and combined with reduced imports, sugar beet is both scarce and expensive. Soya hulls are difficult to source until later in the winter and remain costly, partly due to pressure from sugar beet shortages.

In summary, protein markets are under pressure from regulatory, trade, and currency factors.

Cereals remain well-supplied but are being influenced by exchange rates, and fibre supplies remain tight.



## £1M INVESTMENT IN NEW GRINDERS

**We have invested £1 million in new Tietjen grinders at our Holsworthy mill to be able to deliver consistent, high-quality meal for the South West layers' market.**

The investment will be beneficial to birds as consistent meal grist is crucial for layers, helping to optimise feed intake, gut health and, ultimately, bird performance.

Our mill produced over 190,000 tonnes of feeds in total over the past 12 months, and we now join our sister company, Maseys Feeds, in manufacturing poultry feed.

### TAILORED DIETS FOR EVERY STAGE

We offer a comprehensive range of layer feeds designed to meet bird requirements throughout the production cycle.

As layer flocks continue to push genetic potential with longer laying cycles, the nutritional input becomes important to ensure both high egg production and egg size control to deliver optimal results.

Our high-fibre range, formulated to a minimum 4% fibre across all diets, supports your flock throughout the laying period. Providing a well-balanced supply of energy, protein, minerals and vitamins to meet the nutritional needs of the modern-day, high-performing laying hen.

Layers Extra Meal is a new diet, designed for high-performing flocks later in lay. It sustains high egg numbers while maintaining eggshell strength through to depletion by:

- ✓ Providing a balance of energy and amino acids to support high-performing flocks later in lay.
- ✓ Calcium levels are increased, while phosphorus is reduced to promote shell quality.
- ✓ The diet also contains Panbonis™, proven to maintain shell integrity and liver function.

The product, Layers Extra Meal, is recommended for flocks still achieving peak levels of production at 50-60 weeks and beyond to help maintain high egg output and shell quality.

### EXPANDING POULTRY SUPPORT

We have a team of dedicated specialists, bringing added value to your unit by:

- ✓ Advising on the transfer of pullets and transition from rearing to the laying house.
- ✓ Weighing birds and monitoring bird condition to peak production and beyond.
- ✓ Monitoring egg size and advising on ration changes.
- ✓ Supporting with costings.
- ✓ Plotting production data, providing you with an overview of flock performance and profitability.

We don't wish to just supply our customers but partner with them in their success.

In addition to our range of layer diets, we are now also an approved supplier of Stonegate producers.

**For further information, please contact Harpers Feeds on 01409254300.**



# HOW LIVE YEAST CAN HELP BOOST COW PERFORMANCE

**With more variable and higher dry matter forages this winter, many herds will likely face more ration changes than usual.**

To help cows cope, and to get the most value from forage, adding the rumen-specific live yeast Levucell SC Digestaid (which contains the strain *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* CNCM I-1077) to your Total Mixed Ration (TMR) can help.

This live yeast supports greater rumen stability, helping cows ride out fluctuations in ration quality. It also improves feed efficiency by enhancing fibre digestion. Trials have shown a 5-9% increase in NDF digestibility and a 6% lift in milk yield, helping maximise the return on bought-in feeds as well as making feed and forage go further.

With cheaper cereals being fed at higher rates, the risk of acidosis is heightened. Levucell SC Acidease helps rebalance the rumen microbiota quickly. The inclusion of highly digestible hydrolysed yeast helps combat acidosis.

A relatively dry harvest has also led to many high dry matter forages, increasing the likelihood of heating and mould growth. To help mitigate mycotoxin challenges, Levucell SC Toxisorb combines live yeast with high-quality yeast cell wall to target toxins and helps protect the digestive tract while supporting immune function.

**To find out more, speak to your Feed Specialist.**

# HARPERS POWERS UP PERFORMANCE OF ITS COARSE MIXES

**Coarse mixes offer several benefits for livestock, including enhanced palatability.**

Our coarse mixes have been a long-standing, consistent and well-performing range for customers, particularly those who show livestock.

Our coarse mixes are incorporated with high quality ingredients that are high in protein and starch to drive growth rates and boost feed intakes.

To further improve product quality, we recently upgraded our coarse-mixing facilities in our manufacturing plant by installing a state-of-the-art, energy-efficient Trioliet mixer. It can mix three tonnes of coarse mix per batch in just 6-7 minutes, enabling faster turnaround times and precise mix accuracy.

The new mixer provides superior consistency, a precision weigher for more accurate production and full traceability across every load.

Our range of coarse mixes can contain either Levucell SC or Bio-Mos yeast as standard.

- ✓ Levucell SC supports rumen function, helping to improve rumen pH. Trials have shown it can improve average daily liveweight gain and feed efficiency in beef animals.
- ✓ Bio-Mos delivers similar benefits by enhancing feed efficiency and immune system development.

The Harvest range offers fixed formulated, tailored nutrition for cattle and sheep.

**For more information, please speak to your Feed Specialist.**



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

EVENT	DATE	LOCATION
<b>Monday 1st December</b>	South West Winter Fair	Sedgemoor Market
<b>Wednesday 3rd December</b>	Massey Harpers 8th Birthday	Massey Harpers, EX22 6FU
<b>Saturday 6th December</b>	Wadebridge Rugby Game - To book, call 01409 254 300	Wadebridge RFC, PL27 6AQ
<b>Tuesday 13th January 2026</b>	Harpers Sheep Meeting - To book, call 01409 254 300	South Molton RFC, South Molton, EX36 3LH, 6.30pm
<b>Thursday 15th January 2026</b>	Harpers Sheep Meeting - To book, call 01409 254 300	Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton, TQ13 7RB, 6.30pm
<b>Friday 16th January 2026</b>	North Tawton Rugby Game - To book, call 01409 254 300	North Tawton Rugby Club, EX20 2ED
<b>Saturday 17th January 2026</b>	Bideford Rugby Game - To book, call 01409 254 300	Bideford Rugby Club, EX39 2QS (In conjunction with Torch Vets)

## CHRISTMAS OPENING HOURS

**We are only closed on Christmas Day, Boxing Day Bank Holiday, and New Year's Day Bank Holiday** but our normal delivery days may be subject to change. **The last order date before Christmas is Tuesday 9th December** and the last order date before **New Year is Tuesday 16th December**. Please help us help you by providing as much spread as possible during the holiday season. Thank you for your co-operation.

Everyone at Harpers Feeds and Massey Harpers wishes all our customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.