



Testimonials – RABDF Entrepreneurship in Dairying bursaries



JOHN KIRKBY (2020)

I am from a non-farming background, but it has always been a goal and dream of mine to run my own dairy farm. To be able to run a profitable and sustainable farming business, it is important that I have a clear idea and understanding as to what is involved and what is required.

The first session of the course was presented by a representative from AHDB and covered milk contracts and how to select the right milk contract to suit the business. The second half of the session focussed on milk market trends, what consumers are looking for when purchasing milk and how Covid 19 has changed consumer habits. This was presented by a supermarket rep and a milk processor.

Weeks two and three of the course were hosted by Paul Harris from Real Success. The sessions focussed on people management. People management is often overlooked and undervalued by many farmers, but it is one of the key skills needed to run a successful farming business. Not all members of staff will have the same personality and as farms change and expand it is important to know how to communicate effectively with different people. Using different communication styles for different personalities is something I will use now as well as in the future.

Recruitment and staff retention is a topic that I found very interesting. As the industry requires people to work long hours and sometimes in high pressure situations, it is easy to let emotions run high and get the better of yourself and employees. Finding ways to manage emotions and minimise high pressure situations will bring massive benefits to both the employer and the employee.

Session four was our first session on finance and was led by Tony Evans. Papers and information were sent in the post as the course ran online due to Covid 19. However, some people did not receive the paperwork. Business planning and accounting was the area that really drew me to the course in the first place. The sessions with Tony were really beneficial and gave a useful insight into the business planning and accounting side of farming businesses.

Session five was the second day of the financial section of the course and focused on budgeting. We also completed a third session with Tony to enable us to cover all parts of the financial section. Tony's sessions were practical and got you thinking for yourself which I really enjoyed.

Week six was hosted by Sian Bushell who is an expert on succession planning. Succession planning was something that I've not given much thought to as I am not in line to take over a family farm business. However, it was interesting to hear that a lot of farmers see succession planning as a taboo subject and don't succession plan. Not succession planning can often lead to families falling out.

The penultimate session was with Tony Evans again. This session focussed on Joint Ventures. JVs is an area that I am interested in as I see being part of a JV one of my biggest opportunities to start a dairy farm business of my own.

The final week brought both groups of the EID course together for the first time. The session had many speakers. Caroline Ingamells was the first speaker from the Anderson Centre and spoke about the future of farm support in the UK. We then moved on to focus on consumer insights, consumer trends and consumer spending habits in relation to dairy products and what consumers want to see.

The final two speakers of the session were previous EID attendees. They spoke about their progress and how the course benefited them. It was great to listen to how their careers and businesses have developed due to what they had learnt on the EID course.

I hope the course benefits me in a similar way and I am looking forward to progressing within the dairy industry and hopefully starting my own business.

LUKE UPTON (2020)

I'm a Staffordshire boy, but in 2020 I moved to West Yorkshire to start a new job on a 280 cow split block dairy unit, with a view to buying into the business and moving into a contract farming position in 6 months.

My parents are county council tenants, so I've been farming my whole life. In my early career I worked on a few intensive farms, but my passion has always been milk produced from forage. I've travelled to New Zealand and spent time working on a 720 cow unit in Canterbury. I also worked on a 450 cow split block unit in Newcastle, before I made the move to Yorkshire.



In 2020 I applied for a place on the Royal Association of British Dairy Farmers (RABDF) Entrepreneurship in Dairying Programme. I felt that I still had lots to learn with regards to the financial side of farming and I wanted to do everything to ensure that I was fully prepared for the rigors and responsibilities of running a profitable dairy farming business. I was delighted to be accepted and to receive a bursary from the Future Farmers of Yorkshire, supported by the Yorkshire Agricultural Society.

The Entrepreneurs in Dairying course aims to provide participants, from all areas of the dairy industry, with the knowledge and know-how to take their businesses forward, or to have the confidence to start their own business. As 2020 was an unusual year, the course was delivered via online platforms, where it would usually have been run face-to-face with participants meeting and carrying out the sessions together. However, this did not detract from the delivery of the course as it was still very engaging, with the line-up of top-class speakers doing all they could to provide us with the best online sessions they could.

The course ran for 10 weeks, with a session each week on different areas including people management, tax and trading structures, finances, business planning and succession planning. Each session was in-depth and interesting, providing a wealth of knowledge from speakers who were very skilled and experienced in their respective areas. A personal favourite of mine was the people management session in which we had our personalities profiled and learnt all about how to better engage and work with people of different personality types.

Having now completed the course, I have a wealth of knowledge and resources available to me going forward in my career. I now also have a long list of contacts from within all areas of the dairy industry, which allows me access to some of the top minds in their fields if I ever need advice. It has also given me contact with very like-minded people in the industry in the form of my course mates, who I can bounce ideas off or talk with about similar problems we may be facing.

My partner and I have just secured our first farm business tenancy and I believe the Entrepreneurship in Dairying course has given me the tools and the knowledge to do so with much more confidence.

The course has helped me in all areas of the application process, from business and management planning to budgeting and completing cashflow forecasts for the prospective business.

Without having completed this course I feel I would be far less equipped to make the next step in my career. I couldn't recommend this course any more highly to anyone who wants to increase their knowledge of the dairy industry and take their career forward, it has helped me immensely on my path and it will be equally beneficial to anyone who completes it.