****

**Press Release**

2 September 2019

**Best of the UK’s dairy cattle compete for top honours**

Top class cattle from around the country will be competing at this year’s Dairy Show, and the job of deciding which is the cream of the crop involves some world class judges.

As the largest UK dairy show – now sponsored by Mole Valley Farmers - the event hosts some of the most impressive cattle in the UK. “We therefore call in the best judges to decide where to award the top honours,” says Alan Lyons, head of shows.

Over from Canada to judge the Jersey classes – including the Jersey National Show - is Jeff Sayles, who milks 100 Jerseys with his brother Bruce and father Brian. He has judged for a number of years throughout Canada and the USA and will be judging in Australia at the end of October. “My family has been involved in showing and judging for generations. I was eager and had the opportunity to learn from an early age, by watching my dad and attending judging clinics.

“Showing allows breeders to showcase their cows and encourages a sense of community. When you have a good cow or heifer it’s an effective way to promote their strengths and allows for future breeding - through embryos or calves of that cow family.”

Mr Sayles has had his own showing success, receiving Master Breeder from both Jersey Canada and Holstein Canada in 2011. “The more you breed for type and production the more efficient the cow 365 days a year.”

Judging the interbreed heifer and pairs is Graham Bell from Crewe, Cheshire, who brings a wealth of experience with him. “I’ve been judging for 20 years, I used to show so it was a natural progression,” he says. “I’ve shown Holsteins, British Friesians and Shorthorns, I’ve worked as a herdsman, and for the past 20 years my wife and I had a tenancy in Cheshire. We had our own Holsteins and Dairy Shorthorns but we’ve now downsized and have a smallholding rearing dairy heifers.

“Exhibiting gives breeders a platform for their genetics but also allows them to benchmark against others,” he explains.

A winning animal is one which looks as if it will live a long healthy life, says Mr Bell. “If you haven’t got the correct conformation, the animal is never going to express its full potential. A dairy cow performs a really complex production and a good cow will live for 10 plus years and be productive the whole time.”

Iwan Thomas from Neath, Glamorgan, will be judging the Guernsey classes. Originally from a dairy background he started out by taking part in stock judging competitions with the Young Farmers’ Club before getting involved with young breeders, leading him to his current career as a classifier for Holstein UK.

He has judged across a number of breeds throughout his career, with highlights including the Guernsey Island Show in 2018. “I attend shows all over the country; and I do quite a lot with Young Farmers’ stock judging – I feel like I’ve benefited so much from it, it’s time to give something back,” says Mr Thomas. “I’m always keen to judge, it’s an honour to be asked and I try to never let anyone down if I can help it.”

So, what does he look for in a winner? “Balance is a big thing, I like to see all components in balance. She must have style, good rump, legs, feet and udder, with clean bone and being open ribbed.” And this translates into longevity and production on the farm. “If her structure is correct she’s going to last longer, if her capacity is good she will milk well - she will maintain milk, fertility and condition.”

Showing is important for farming in many ways, he adds. “It’s the shop window, it’s good for marketing stock and for the public to see how well the cows are looked after – so much effort goes into it.”

A panel of judges will decide the overall interbreed champion. “We have some of the best judges and some of the best of the cows in the country coming to the compete,” says Mr Lyons. “It really will be an exciting day to remember.”

* The Dairy Show will be held on 2 October at the Bath & West Showground. Schedules for show classes are available online, and advance saver tickets can be purchased from [www.bathandwest.com](http://www.bathandwest.com/).
* The Dairy Show is registered with Dairy Pro and current members and those who join at the event will get their attendance registered on their personal development record and receive 2 Dairy Pro points.

# About the Royal Bath & West of England Society

The Society was founded in 1777 in Bath by a group of philanthropists led by Edmund Rack. We are a registered charity organisation (Registered Charity Number 1039397). The Society was formed with the aims of encouraging agriculture, arts, manufacture and commerce.

Our charitable activities provide:

* Agriculture, veterinary, educational and art scholarships
* Technical events and Seminars
* Practical farming advice and conferences
* Countryside Education
* Diversification advice for farmers
* Education for children
* A market place for countryside products
* Plus all the events run by the Society and Bath & West Enterprises Ltd.

**About Mole Valley Farmers Ltd**

Mole Valley Farmers was established in 1960 by a small group of farmers in South Molton, North Devon. Today, there are over 8,300 Farmer Shareholders and 45,000 Country Members. It is a significant employer with a turnover in excess of £464 million.

Mole Valley Farmers trades as a cooperative and has strong values in respect of the farming community. The ethos has always been to help our farming Members improve productivity and profitability by offering a whole range of products and services at competitive prices.

Over the years the company has grown and developed its businesses and now consists of 60 nationwide rural locations, comprising Mole Valley Farmers; Mole Country Stores and Farmdirect.

For further information or media enquiries contact Ruth Wills on 07772 889080 or e-mail ruth@agri-hub.co.uk.