



Press Release

18th April 2017

First class judges at this year's Bath & West

Livestock has been at the heart of the Royal Bath & West Show ever since its first event in 1852. And with over 4,500 entries securing the most qualified judges is crucial.

“We’ve built up a very respectable reputation for the livestock at the Bath & West Show – it’s something we’re very proud of,” says Alan Lyons. “It’s for that reason that we ensure we use the best, well-qualified judges to oversee such a high calibre of animals.”

Heading up this year’s Interbreed Exhibitor-Bred Beef and Supreme Beef Interbreed classes is Michael Read. A third-generation mixed farmer on his 800-acre family farm in the Lincolnshire Wolds, Michael is a very well respected breeder of Lincoln Red cattle, selling semen across the globe as far afield as New Zealand and Canada.

Showing is an integral part of the farm with the 70 head Hemingby Herd enjoying major successes around the country. “To date, the herd has won 500 first place prizes and 65 supreme championships,” says Michael. “Showing is a big part of what we do here.”

Though this his first time at the Royal Bath & West Show, Michael is well rehearsed at West Country shows having judged the supreme classes at both Devon County and the Royal Cornwall show - and a further 12 county shows around the country - and says it’s crucial that livestock remains a fundamental part of shows.

“As well brilliant advertising for pedigree breeders, showing is where town meets county,” says Michael. “This is our opportunity to show and tell the public what we’re doing, and a chance for them to get close and see livestock they may have never seen before – it’s very important we carry on doing it.”

When choosing his winning stock, Michael is firstly looking for an animal with good locomotion. “A first-class animal has got to be able to walk,” he says. “I’m looking for something that walks well and has sound legs and feet. However, all the cattle on display will be of the highest standard, so it really will come down to small differences.”

Whether it’s beef, dairy, pigs or sheep, showing livestock is a core part of many commercial farms, as while the animals may look preened, the real essence of showing is about selecting the best genetics from which to breed future stock.

In the sheep rings, Richard Wear will be judging the Interbreed Championship at the Bath & West for the first time. However, he has a long history with the show, with his family first bringing stock to the event in 1961.

Farming 160 acres close the Mendip hills in Somerset, Richard has a substantial reputation - both nationally and globally - with his 25 head Ruslin Ryeland flock. "The highlight of my showing career has been winning the Champion Ryeland Flock – awarded for winning the most shows – 18 years in a row," he says. "We're hugely proud of that achievement.

"I've enjoyed judging at all the major UK shows – including the Royal Show and the Royal Smithfield - and was also lucky enough to be asked to judge both the Royal Melbourne Show and the Royal New Zealand Show twice," says Richard.

A decent walk is also top of his list when it comes to awarding the Interbreed Champion. "Locomotion is particularly important because if it's poor, sheep can't graze," he explains. "I'm looking for a smart animal that is eye catching – something that is bright, alert and active."

As well as giving breeders the chance to showcase their stock, the social aspects of showing are invaluable, says Richard. "You get the opportunity to meet a lot of people you'd never come across at any other occasion – it's a very important part of agricultural shows."

- The Royal Bath & West Show will be held on 31 May – 3 June. Tickets are available from the website: <http://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show/visitors/tickets> or by calling 0844 776 6777.

For further information or media enquiries contact Olivia Cooper on 01392 840009 or e-mail olivia@agri-hub.co.uk.

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

As the Society approaches its 240th year it continues to deliver a wonderful mix of established traditional exhibits through to the latest energy technology and contemporary entertainment.

The entertainment and features around the 242-acre site ensure enjoyment for every member of the family and include attractions that are spectacular to watch, educational, inspirational, “hands on” or just plain fun.

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