

Conference Question and Answers: Day Three

Session 4

Chair: P. Cottingham, NFU

Speakers: L. Alderson, Rare Breeds Survival Trust

R. Wardle, Consultant

H. Kehoe & C. Morgan, PONT

S. Hall & D. Whittaker, Doncaster College

Brief Question and Answers period at the end of the session:

Dunsdon field trip

Q) You implied that you came up against a big problem with a dairy farm. Can you get them on side? Could it cause a rift between dairy and beef farmers?

A) P. Burgess – DWT have provided whole farming advice whether dairy or beef and are doing a huge amount of work with dairy farmers.

Fowlescombe and Wembury field trip

Q) Problems in dealing with bureaucracy. Set up a land trust to deal with paperwork so farmers don't have to. Farmer's lack of IT knowledge needs to be addressed.

A) P. Burgess – Regulation is essential. Don't have an effective stick but carrot is not effective either – regulation needs to be done well.

Session 5

Chair: T. Brooks, FWAG

Speakers: Karl-Heinz Kolb, Bavarian Farmers Association

G. Harvey, Author

R. Snow, Defence Estates

Brief Question and Answers period at the end of the session:

Q) B. Grayson – Is it not asking farmers to delay timing of their grazing until you get a big bulk of what is essentially unpalatable to livestock?

A) G. Harvey – It is called mob grazing and involves leaving long intervals between grazing. Has been trialled by an American farmer who was convinced the first time he did it that it would be wasteful and unpalatable but he found that the results were very good. The cattle did very well, they were healthy and it produced good meat.

Q) Comment – The problem is getting principles and arguments accepted. It is a big challenge for the future.

A) G. Harvey – Long ago I thought that the only way policy is going to change is through consumers understanding better. The carbon thing is a new element; soil is important and is now on the political agenda. For example the Chinese are trying to get soil carbon incorporated into the Copenhagen agenda.

Q) M. Butterfield (DWT) – How can we get customers into buying these products?

A) G. Harvey – Need a programme like coast, where public is shown grasslands with a scientist explaining how it is good for you.

Q) R. Barker (farmer) – Comment – I read a report from New York with the statistic that the amount of crude oil that is used per 14 month old animal is 32 barrels.

A) G. Harvey – Fear pushes people to act. Tesco are now putting carbon footprint figures on their products. People are starting to learn more. It is important to get these facts out to people.

Q) B. Barker (farmer) – It is really positive to hear the idea of locking up carbon but livestock farming has had really bad publicity e.g. climate change.

A) G. Harvey – Everyone now knows that methane emissions by dairy cows are damaging. If I was a conspiracy theorist I would wonder who put this information out there. For example in the book the diet delusion it concludes that there is absolutely no evidence that fats cause heart disease, the author put the blame on refined carbohydrates i.e. sugar.