

The Faces Behind Our Food

Interview with Sharon Peacock, Cockerham Boers

Interviewer: Anna Clayton

Johnny Bean, Chris Peacock, Ben Peacock and Amy Peacock also present

Duration: 15 minutes.24 seconds

Date and time: 19th September 2016 5:30pm

Location: Cockerham, LA20ER

Time (minutes.seconds)	Interview transcript
0.10	<p>Interviewer in bold, Sharon in normal type Interjections in [square brackets], other sounds and notes in (these brackets)</p> <p>Ok, alright, can you tell us; introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about what you do here in Cockerham. Yep, I'm Sharon Peacock. With my husband, Chris, we farm one of the UK's longest established and largest pedigree meat goat herds. We, we were established in 2000 and we now produce about 150 carcasses of goat a year. [OK]</p>
0.28	<p>And how, how big is your small holding? We run on 23 acres that we own and we rent in a further 10 acres. That's big enough to sustain the number of animals that we have, um, and produce our own forage- off site- which obviously keeps our costs down, which means we can sell our product at a value for money price.</p>
0.48	<p>And do you work with anyone else? Who helps around the farm? The, it's a family farm. So Chris does mornings and nights, I'm full time here, um, the children do feeding chickens and picking vegetables and the like, and my mother and father come one day a week to help a bit with big jobs. And a couple of friends help if we need extra hands. [OK]. Pretty much Chris and meself. [Brilliant].</p>
1.09	<p>And what lead you, your family, to... or how you ended up being here? How have you ended up raising goat meat? The, goat meat specifically was not the original plan. We bought the farm with the plan to be self-sufficient - we were going to have some of each thing and feed ourselves. And, um, we stumbled upon goats; we hadn't eaten goats ourselves prior to buying them. And we stumbled upon the fact that there was a breed of goat specifically for meat production, which we then bought a few of, again, we planned to get other things later. And people tried the goat meat and they liked it. And by the end of the year it had all gone and we hadn't any left for ourselves. So we bought a few more, and bought a few more, and ended up with over a 120-130 breeding females and specialised in that. We realised there was a gap for a quality goat meat product.</p>
2.04	<p>Yes, so goat meat seems a bit unusual. Are there (laughs) is there anybody else doing this in the UK? When we started, there was probably two or three others doing semi-commercial</p>

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	<p>goat meat. Um, there are maybe 15 or 20 now. And there is a big industry in selling dairy kids, um, for meat. But ours is a different product. It's the difference between eating a quality beef cow or eating dairy cow. But there's a meat breed which is what we produce. And it gives a sweeter meat, and a slightly higher fat content. It's that fat content that tenderises and sweetens it. There are others these days but there weren't when we started. [OK].</p>
2.46	<p>Ummm, can you talk us through your average day? What do you do? (laughs) Average in farming! Is there any such thing as average in farming? Ummm (laughs). We start about half six or seven depending on the time of year. Um, and do morning feeding rounds, which, at this time of year, are taking us 20 minutes, half an hour to do between the two of us. We both do that. In the winter, and certainly at kidding season, we do a couple of hours, both of us, before Chris goes to work. Um, and then, I tend to do paper work in the morning until dinner time. It's amazing how much paper work there is in farming! And then from lunch time I then come back out on the farm- doing routine jobs- foot trimming and dosing during the days. Any bits and pieces of work that need doing. And the evening rounds. Hopefully this gets done before Chris gets home from work. Weekends we set about and do anything big that needs two people. So we tend to work seven days. Although, as the children get older, we are trying to not do as much [yeah] on a Sunday as we used to. It's about trying to have a bit of time off on a Sunday, um, but yeah. Seven days and 365 days a year. [wow]</p>
3.58	<p>And how, how do the seasons change what you do round the farm (sound of Ben playing). Um, like I say, winter is the busiest time. There's a lot of stock in doors, and lots of stock eating forage. So we're pushing barrows of feed, haylage around, barrows of hay up and down and out to fields twice a day (children playing). Erm, and, and more mucking out, and more bits of animals knocking around.</p>
4.24	<p>Kidding season we do, about March and April, we do two or three weeks of crazy kidding where pretty much its 24 hours a day. Erm, and at that point we do call in. We tend to get a student vet in or we have, erm, neighbours come and help. Someone is pretty much on the go 24 hours for three weeks. Us for 16 hours probably of that (laughs) but other people dart in a bit.</p>
4.53	<p>Erm, summer is a funny time of year. Cause, its, it's very quiet doing but you still can't get away. The animals are out in the fields, so they have to be checked out-out in fields. The young stock often get their heads through the fencing and we have to go out and collect them out when they've got stuck, and also forage making is in the summer.</p>
5.11	<p>And then we get through to autumn where we've a 'tupping' season – so the males are put out with groups of females, and make the next generation. Erm in the autumn, so October, November time we are in tupping season and we split all the girls up into groups of about 20 or 30 and put them with their own individual male, which we select, to get the right breeding. Erm, pick the right male for the right female. (sound of children playing) [OK]</p>

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<p>5.40</p>	<p>And how does your meat differ to that sold within the supermarkets? To my knowledge there is no mainstream supermarket selling goat meat at all. There have been two or three contact us trying to get goat meat into the supermarkets, so there obviously the demand is there. But it isn't, it isn't there yet. There isn't enough production. The goat meat we produce is all from the meat breeds – so either the Boer goat or the breed we breed, which is the British meat goat. Erm, which was originally based on the Boer goat. Erm, it has a sweeter taste to some of the dairy goat meat that is available, and that what would be in the supermarkets if the, in the supermarkets that do sell it, its dairy cull. Erm, and goat can often have a misconception that it has to be long cooked. Erm, or cooked very slowly over a great amount of time. What we are selling; because it's a higher fat content, is a quicker cooking product. It cooks the same as lamb. And, er, the fat is moistening it and tenderising it. Which is the problem you get with lower quality products is that it is not tender because it has not got enough fat in it. And, and ours also, we pre-breed specifically for animal welfare and the environmental awareness and things. So we are looking at food miles and production of our product as well. So, what, what we are aiming for is a quality product at a value for money price. With the animal welfare a really high priority. [yep]</p>
<p>7.18</p>	<p>Erm, so tell us about your goat herd. Do you have any favourites? (You could answer this?) (laughs) [Who's your favourite goat?] Hmmm, well it was Trevor when we had her. [Sheryl?] [I knew you would say it was Trevor] [Trevor?] Trevor was a goat; they tend to get a kid each year that's [OK] their favourite. But then obviously, they have to go. Same as the others. And they are quite used to the fact that their kid goes that they've made friends with. And they had Trevor one year. Erm, obviously your old ladies become favourites and they tend to get a name. But they are acquire a name. So we have a goat called 'can I have a go', cause whatever you are doing she comes up and goes 'can I have a go at that?' She's there all the time. Always. And she always has been. She's an 11 year old now. So she, you notice them. And with the younger ones... you get one, the odd one that acquires a name just by accident. Like we have a goat with the number 777 in its ear so she is Boeing. She can't be anything else! But, that makes them more memorable than others. So, although we know them all apart, there are certain ones that you know better. And then you can't help but have a little more attachment to them. Erm, but they are all here for a reason. [yeah, and...] And we all know what that reason is. The older ladies- obviously they don't go for meat, but the younger ones you don't, you tend not to name them if you can help it and... you know what they are here for. They have a nice life while they are here, which is the whole point. It's why we started farming. To make sure that what we ate, ourselves, had had a nice time and had the best possible situation that it was raised in. [yep, ok, ummm. What other questions...].</p>
<p>8.58</p>	<p>Are there any challenges or opportunities facing the business? Ummm, we don't have the challenges we did. When we first started we got: goat meat? Oooo, but who eats goat meat? And, and we also competed constantly with the preconceived ideas of goat meat. So people would say "ooo goat. That's</p>

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	<p>for curry isn't it?" And so we always, in the early days, made a lot of effort to make people realise that actually it's a varr, ergh, a variable product and you can do lots of different things. Versatile was the word I was looking for. We make a shepherd's pie with it. We make bolognaise with it. We roast it. And we don't, we cook it like lamb. So, the challenge was to make people realise what it was and what, and that it was available. Ummm, probably now the challenge is being able to produce enough for the customers. So, we've, we've flipped that coin. We've gone from working hard to sell our product to people who weren't sure they wanted it. To letting people down cause we can't provide it quick enough. Ummm we have expanded to cover that. But we are limited, not only in acreage. But we are limited by the fact that we won't get more than we can cope with. We could keep mass producing and mass producing but that's not what we are about. We are not about the mass production. We are about looking after them and knowing them apart. So we are restricting ourselves now to this. We have always mail ordered, or we have mail ordered for a long time – we've sent it all over the country. But our preference is a local costumer. We would rather sell more locally, than posting it. Ummm, obviously again- it's your food miles and it's what we want of our food and it's what I try and produce for our customers. [hmmm]</p>
<p>10.52</p>	<p>What about, ummm, so last Christmas we had really bad rains and storms in the Lancashire area. Did you survive that? Or you came...</p> <p>Erm it was hard work actually. It was hard work all summer because of the floods last winter- about half our land was under water for six weeks. Erm, which. If your, if your house is flooded it's a terrible situation and then the water goes away again. In farming, it's a much longer term impact that flood water. Not only for us but for everyone. The land was under water for six weeks, so that grass didn't then grow in the spring properly. That land was damaged, which meant that the stock couldn't go on that land. Which meant that the land they were on, they were on, got overgrazed, so that didn't grow as well as it could do. Erm, so it's been slow all summer because we were hit then. And obviously it's also impacted the forage value which we are cropping now, which will impact our costs over this winter. So it's actually by the time the animals are eating the food this winter, that cost us more to produce, they will be being finished for meat a year after that. So this floods over this winter impacts nearly two whole years really. (phone ringing). Erm, before the impact then wears down again (phone ringing).[OK...sorry.] It's alright, I'm surprised mine has not gone off.</p>
<p>12:25</p>	<p>So, for Ben and Amy, do you hope that they continue this? Ben's shaking his head- why?!</p> <p>Ben: I, I absolutely hate farming. (laughter)</p> <p>Amy: I probably will continue.</p> <p>Sharon: Of the two of them, Amy is keener than Ben. Ben's...</p> <p>Amy, do you want to come here and say why?</p> <p>Ben: I have never been keen on farms. [You've never?]. Never.</p> <p>Amy: It's just because, I like farmssss. [What do you like about living here?]</p> <p>Amy: Hmm- all the animals we have. (laughter).</p> <p>Sharon: Lots of animals haven't we.</p>
<p>12:58</p>	<p>There's something quite special about sitting down to a plate of food, that every</p>

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	<p>bit has come off your own property. [yeah]. And nine times out of ten, in, at this time of year, every piece of food we eat has been, come off, has come off the farm. Its fab. I go to the supermarket and think: hmmm, why have I come here? (laughs) It's great! There's something really special about it. And the first meal in the spring- that's your first one. When the veg starts coming, its fab that meal.</p>
13.25	<p>It's a shame for the child really, in a way, because they've... It's always been there... So to them it's not as magic or as special as us. At kidding season I still, and Chris. Every single kid in is like magic. How can you watch an animal turn from one in a pen to three in a pen? How does that happen!? (Laughs). But these are like- ah yeah- it's another one (laughs). It's been there all their lives really. So it's, and even this. We sit out and think – what did we do to deserve all this? You know? And I know what I did. I worked flippin hard, but these... it's been there all their lives. And it's a bit sad really. Cause you just don't know how special it is (laughs) [Ben: it's not!]. And you don't know how much work daddy and I have put in (laughs) [Ben: none!] Go away you... [Ben: no...] Please, now. [No]. Well please be polite.</p>
14.17	<p>I've finished all my questions really. Can you think of anything else you want to say? I'm sure there's loads (laughs). It's beautiful here though. Isn't it? Yeah, You're very lucky. We were sat out here for tea the other night. It's just great- goat chops and. Sat all round. It's great when it's like this and when the forage is in. This, if you knew, come, before the forage was in last week. It was a whole different situation. A whole different attitude cause it's so stressful waiting [yeah] for that to be ready.</p>
14.48	<p>I guess some people don't know what forage is. So what is forage? Its all, the hay, haylage and silage are the main things. The, the dried grass or preserved grass – so you can feed them grass through the winter as well as through the summer. Ummm, ours graze all year. The stock does go out to the fields all year, but there is no goodness left in the grass in the winter. So you gather up the 'good grass' in the summer and use it to feed them in the winter. [hmmm]. So it's the bulk- your roughage essentially. [Great. Fantastic. So I will stop there]</p>