

# **Dani-Leigh Bailey's**

## **QUALITY SCOUT REPORT**

### **visit to a cattle farm in Dorset.**

#### **My first impressions after arriving at the Farm**

It was still raining when we arrived at the farm. Unfortunately, we were dropped off at the wrong entrance and had to walk back to the farmhouse with the farmer, through puddles and mud!!! We finally got to do the proper introductions with the farmer John, his son and his wife, as well as Peter Mitchell who works for Esca (who manufacture the McDonald's patties).

We changed from our normal everyday shoes into our Wellingtons and got ready for the fun to start. We then walked back down the lane to meet the cattle (after all, that was why we were there). My first impressions of the farm were that it was a lot tidier than I had expected and didn't smell too bad either.

#### **Meeting the Cattle**

We were taken to the shed where the cattle were being kept during the winter. I must admit I was a bit shocked at how many were in what seemed such a small place, but on closer inspection I realised the cattle are very nosy animals and had all come down by the fencing to see who these strangers were. When I asked John about the space he assured me they had plenty of room and that he was actually allowed to have more cattle in there than he had. I asked plenty of questions which John and his son never evaded and always answered promptly in language that we understood. We certainly felt they weren't trying to hide anything from us.

The cows all looked healthy and had plenty of clean straw and food. They had previously been outside grazing in the fields but come in during winter, partly to be bulked up to the weight needed to be slaughtered for the beef as they now have an age limit on beef. They are also brought in to avoid them churning up the wet fields with their hooves. Every animal had a tag in each ear. This is so that they can be traced from birth to the slaughterhouse. They even had a passport. I was really impressed as John didn't mind the kids running up and down and enjoying themselves.

### **Yet more cattle to meet**

We then went to look at some other cows called steers (castrated male used for beef instead of breeding). The farmer explained that we couldn't go into the pen or too close as these animals were quite volatile and didn't like strangers. They didn't even like any other steers being brought into the 'family' unit that they had grown up in. Their horns are removed at birth so as not to hurt one another. In days gone by these steers wouldn't have had any purpose in life so would have been killed at birth, but are now reared for their beef.

John also took us to one of the fields where some more cattle were grazing. While we were discussing the benefits of field or barn, Rosie had decided to jump in some puddles getting mucky rain water in her wellies (half full in fact) and all up the back of her trousers. At least she was having fun!

We stopped to look at some farm machinery as Andrew has some play ones at home - he couldn't believe the size of the actual things!! We also saw some silage wrapped in plastic

and John explained that they could no longer burn the plastic like they used to - it must be disposed of properly.

John then washed our Wellingtons down with a hosepipe before we went to look at the feed store. It was huge, I was quite expecting to see mice or rats running about but didn't (thank God!!). John explained that they have a pest control man come in and lay bait boxes to keep them away.

### **Even cattle need a passport**

After wandering round the farm and feeling rather cold we were invited into the farmer's home for coffee. We changed back into our normal shoes - we had to completely change Rosanna's clothing (luckily I had brought spare for both kids!!). John then showed us the paperwork that was involved with running a farm, explaining all about the passport systems, how you go about getting more ear tags if a cow loses one and what happens when an animal dies. He also explained that he rears the cattle and sends it to the slaughterhouse. From there, the flanks and forequarter are sent to ESCA and the other parts go to the supermarket.

We should have left the farm at about 12.30pm but were really engrossed in the conversation so didn't leave until 1pm, where we went back to the McDonald's Restaurant at Dorset for lunch. After lunch, we sat and discussed our thoughts on what we had seen. On the whole I was very impressed with everything we had seen and how we had been treated.

### **My main concerns**

The main concerns I had before I went were not only for the welfare of the cattle but also that of the farmer. I personally think that the cattle were very well looked after. So was the farmer, although I did leave wondering whether all his efforts

were properly rewarded, given all the time and money he himself puts into rearing the animals.