

When you buy Aberdeen Angus beef from Co-op, you're helping to support one of eleven Scottish farms. Rosie Mullender heads to Dumfries and Galloway for a closer look

Made in Scotland



'A happy cow is a productive one, so we make sure ours are as happy as possible.'

Fourth-generation farmer Keith Henderson wants to spread the message about what goes into producing top-quality Scottish beef

Watch our Aberdeen Angus and Hereford cows in action at coop.co.uk/foodmagazine

As a gust of wind whips up around me, I worry I'm going to be blown clean off the lowlands where Co-op beef farmer Keith Henderson tends to his Aberdeen Angus cattle. But surveying the blustery landscape, he looks perfectly at home.

'I never thought I'd do anything other than become a farmer,' he smiles. 'I went to university to study agriculture, but city life really didn't suit me. I've never been so glad to come home!'

We're on Carswadda farm in Dumfries and Galloway, where I've come to learn a bit more about how Co-op Aberdeen Angus is produced.

'Our farm has been run by the Henderson family since my great grandfather was a tenant here in 1901,' Keith tells me, pointing to a crop of trees swaying on the skyline that mark the boundary of the first Henderson farm. 'Since then, we've expanded to work 2,000 acres, holding cattle, sheep and crops, which I look after with my brother Scott.' Now, their children are learning the ropes to continue the family's proud history.

They will eventually manage the 1,600-strong herd, from which fantastic Aberdeen Angus steaks, mince and burgers are made for Scottish Co-op stores. So what else did I learn about Aberdeen Angus beef – except that to produce it, you need to be a fan of the great outdoors?

Cows don't need a lot to be happy... 'A happy cow is a productive one, so we make sure ours are as happy as possible,' Keith says. And the secret? 'Leave them alone!' he laughs. 'Cattle have been perfectly happy left to their own devices for hundreds of years, so as long as they're fed and healthy, and producing and feeding healthy calves, I leave them to do their own thing.'



BRILLIANT BEEF
Aberdeen Angus beef is available in our Scottish stores

meet the producer

'I feel so lucky to be working in this beautiful countryside. All I have to do is step outside and I'm at work.'

... but they don't like being cold and wet

'Our cattle are outside feeding on grass most of the year, except when it's very cold and wet. We can get up to 60 inches of rain a year here, so we have to bring them indoors,' he says. 'Thanks to the temperate climate and varied soil types in this beautiful area we produce very good grass – and good grass makes delicious beef.'

Co-op farmers care about animal welfare

'We're gold-standard producers for Co-op, thanks to our high standards,' Keith explains. 'We've been farming for 116 years and we're very proud of what we do, so for us it's a natural progression.'

Supporting farmers means supporting other parts of the economy, too.

'What you buy drives an industry that provides employment across the board,' Keith says. 'From the people who produce machinery and fertiliser, to our vets and workers, the farmer is the bedrock for a plethora of industries that help keep the economy going. It's like a web that spreads out from the farm.'

Even beef farmers can't get enough delicious Aberdeen Angus beef.

'I like to keep it nice and simple by having a fillet or sirloin steak... delicious.'

Buying British meat supports farmers who get involved in their communities.

A chairman of his local agricultural show, Keith is keen to spread the message about his quality beef and happy cattle. 'Some people have no idea where their food comes from, so we try to educate them,' he says. 'We want them to know what farming's all about, and the agri shows help connect local people with farmers who can share what they do.'

Working outside is the best thing about being a farmer (sometimes).

'I feel so lucky to be working in this beautiful countryside,' says Keith. 'The best thing about being a farmer is that all I have to do is step outside and I'm at work.' And the worst? 'Well, it's that all I have to do is step outside and I'm at work!'



Top to bottom: feeding time on the farm; Keith keeps a close eye on his herd; free to roam



CO-OP AGRICULTURAL MANAGER CATHERINE BENNETT SAYS:

'For our Irresistible range, we use native British beef breeds – Hereford and Aberdeen Angus. Keith works hard to ensure his cattle are well cared for.'