

Farm profile

History:

The Fordham family have farmed in Little Horsted for 3 generations and came to Bradford's Farm in the 1960s. We are tenant farmers and rent the farm from Mrs Mary Askew, who lives at Bentley. The farm house was built in the 1890s and was originally 2 tiny farm cottages. We have one old Sussex barn, which is now used for tack and horse feed, but most of the buildings were put up since the 1960s. Because farming is not as profitable as it used to be, many of the buildings are used to generate an income from non farming activities, including horse livery, workshops and offices and caravan storage.

We also sell our own beef and pork in our farm butcher's shop, as well as locally produced lamb, pork, bacon, chicken, eggs and meat pies. All of the meat sold in our shop is free range and/or naturally reared and is from our own or other named local farms.

We aim to help young people (and adults!) to learn more about food and farming in a sustainable countryside.

Soil:

Most of the land is grade 3 Tunbridge Wells sand over clay. It is reasonably good land for mixed farming.

Landscape:

The farm is a typical Sussex undulating landscape, with open fields, hedges, woodland areas, ponds and marshy areas.

Climate:

The growing season is usually from March to October, although winter crops grow from October to summer. The amount of rain varies considerably from year to year.

Who lives and works here

Michael Fordham and his wife Kathy, with their son, Timmy. Michael's father Jim calls in to help most mornings. We have one full time employee, Richard; some part time help on the farm and a part time butcher, but the family does most of the work itself. Another 15 people work in the farm buildings, in the workshops and offices.

About the farm

Encouraging wildlife:

We are in the Countryside Stewardship Scheme and we encourage wildlife by:

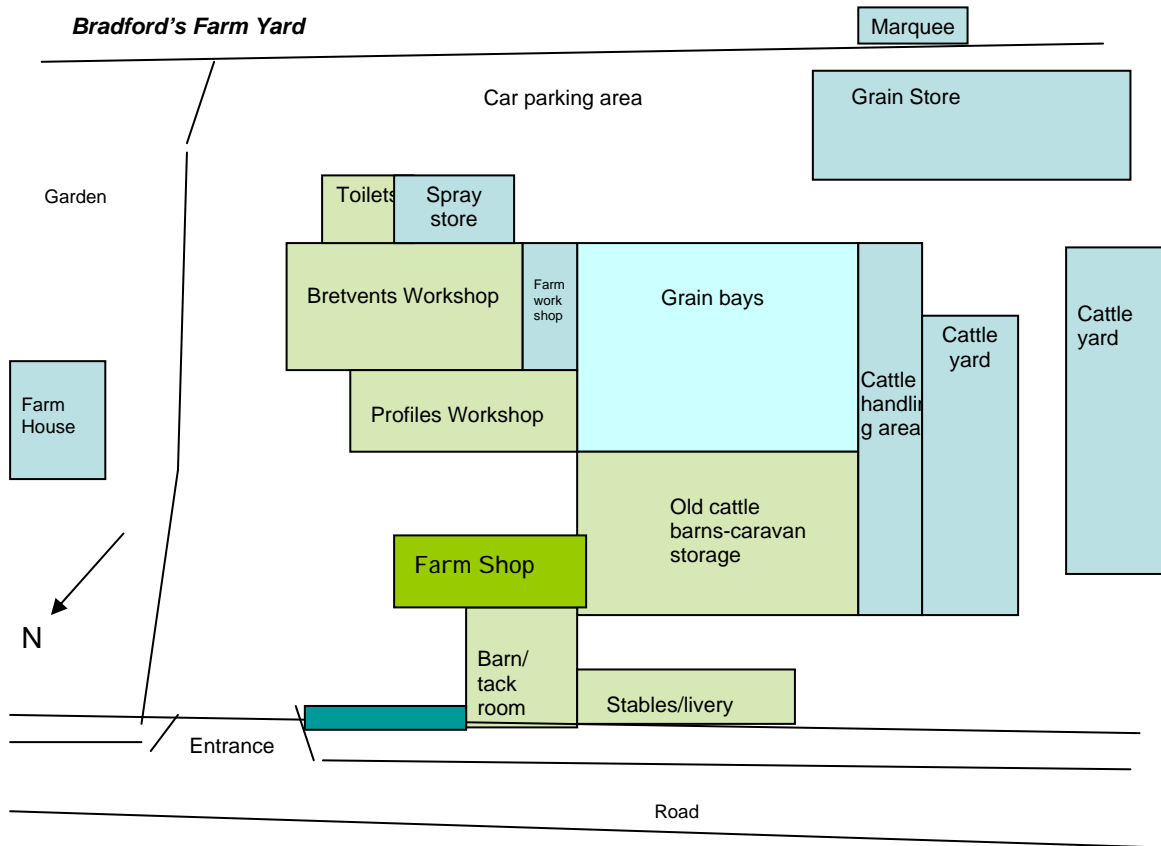
- *Uncultivated field margins*
- *Hedgerow restoration and replacement*
- *Overwintered stubble*
- *New scrapes to provide additional marshy areas*
- *Fields which are not intensively farmed, i.e. limited grazing, spraying and fertiliser application*
- *Barn owl boxes*
- *RSPB bird surveys*

Other enterprises:

Farm Butcher's Shop
DIY livery
Workshops and offices
Caravan storage
Caravan site
Contracting (doing farm work for other farmers)

About the farm

Farm buildings



About the farm

A March day in the life of Michael, the farmer

There is no such thing as a typical day on Bradford's Farm - everything depends on the weather and the time of year. This is what Michael did on one day in March 2005. Meanwhile, Kathy was doing other work on the farm and with the family.

e.g. 6.45a.m.	Get up. Let dog out and open farm yard gates. Feed dog/cat and make tea.
7.15a.m.	Get dressed and have breakfast, load dishwasher
8.00a.m.	Feed and bed up cattle
9.00a.m.	Open post, plan day and make phone calls
10.00a.m.	Get caravans out
10.30a.m.	Collect hay, straw and silage
11.30a.m.	Calibrate seed drill and load trailer with seed
1.00p.m.	Lunch, more phone calls
2.00p.m.	Go drilling
3.30p.m.	Fix machine breakdown and continue drilling
6.00p.m.	Feed cattle, put caravans away
6.30p.m.	Office work
7.00p.m.	Dinner
8.00p.m.	Socialise, TV or meeting
10.30p.m.	Shut gates, go to bed

The farming year

We do different things on the farm each season.

SPRING



Marketing and shop; turn cattle out; spring drilling/sowing; fertilising; spraying; clean out cattle yards; make silage; put up marquee; farm tours

SUMMER



Marketing and shop; make hay; harvesting; loading grain; baling straw; farm tours

AUTUMN



Marketing and shop; ploughing; cultivating; Autumn sowing; cattle housing and weaning; hedge cutting; muck spreading; spraying

WINTER



Marketing and shop; plant hedging; ditching; fencing; repairs; feed animals; cows calving; hedge cutting

Growing crops

On Bradford's Farm we are growing wheat, barley, oats, linseed, beans and sunflowers. We also grow grass.

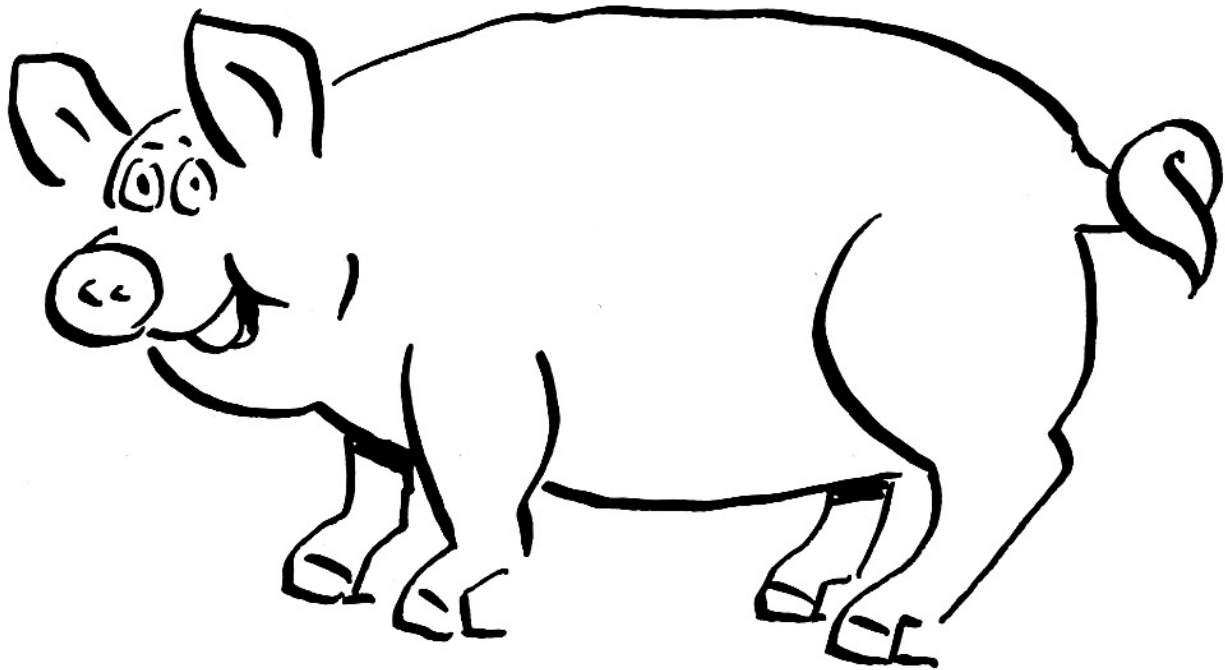
Keeping animals

Pigs

We keep Kune Kune pigs, which are a rare breed from New Zealand. The Maoris traditionally keep them running around outdoors, where they eat grass and vegetables. Our pigs live outdoors in the field with a shelter and eat vegetables and pig nuts.

Our boar is called Spot and our sow is Martha. The piglets are ready to make pork when they are about 11 months old.

Female pigs, called sows, have ten to twelve piglets in the average litter. Each sow can produce about five litters in two years.



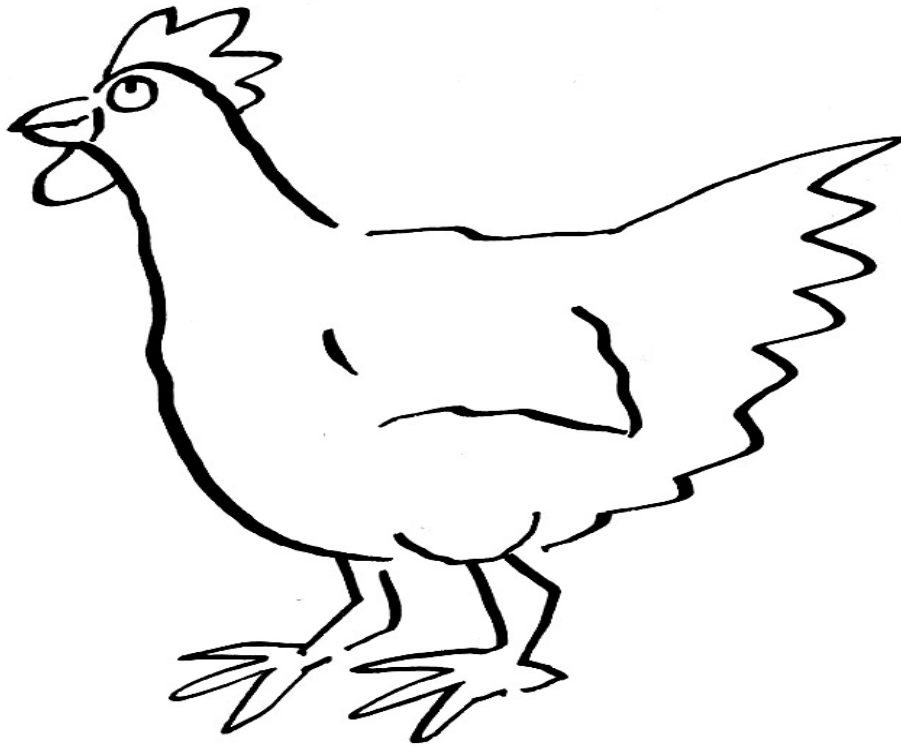
Keeping animals

Chickens

Timmy keeps 4 chickens and supplies the household with eggs. The breeds are 2 Meadow Rangers and 2 Goldline.

They are fed on wheat and kitchen scraps. They are kept outside, but in a coop to protect them from foxes. We shut them in the henhouse at night.

Hens normally lay eggs that are unfertilised, which means that no chicks will grow in them. If a farmer wants to produce chicks, rather than eggs to eat, he has to mate his hens with a cockerel. The fertile eggs then hatch into chicks. We do not have a cockerel, as they are very noisy!



Keeping animals

Beef cattle

We usually have about 32 cows with calves, 20 yearlings (last year's calves which we are finishing for beef) and 20 finished animals.

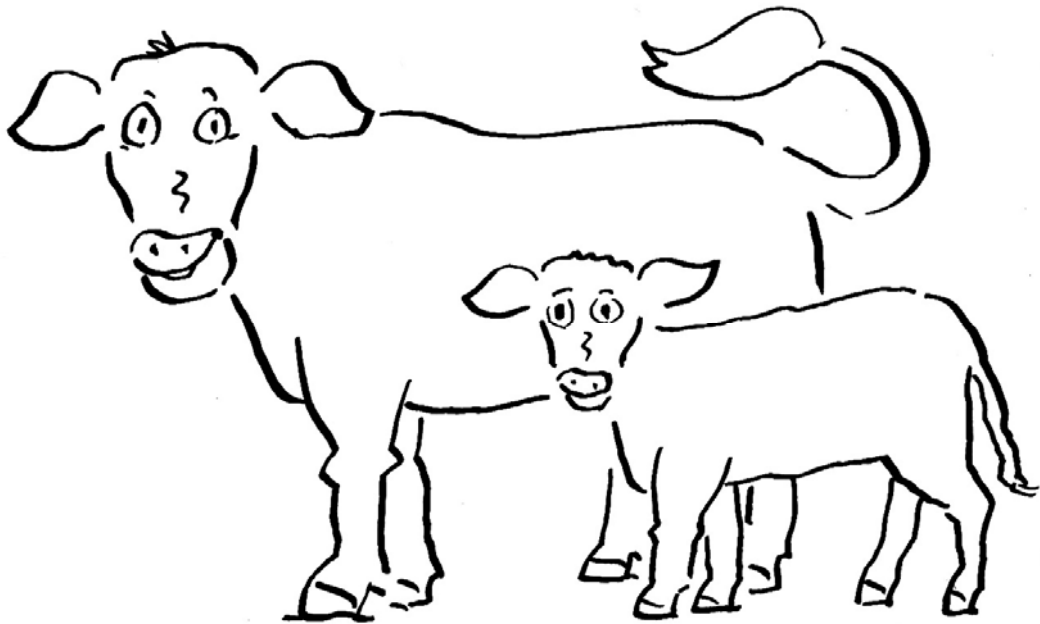
They are mostly Aberdeen Angus cross.

They eat fresh grass in the fields in summer, and in winter preserved grass, as hay or silage.

They are kept in covered yards in winter and in the fields the rest of the year

Beef cattle are kept to produce meat. We sell our beef in our farm shop. We also sometimes sell it to local pubs.

A cow can have calves after she is two years old. Forty weeks after mating she gives birth to one or sometimes two calves. They stay with their mother and feed on her milk until old enough to graze for themselves.



About the farm

Keeping animals

We also keep two donkeys on the farm, as well as horses and ponies, which belong to other people. We sometimes have sheep to graze our fields in the winter.

Farm Processes

We have a combine harvester, a JCB loader and 3 tractors on the farm. We also have lots of different machines which fit onto the tractors, to do different work.

These include:

- Plough
- Seed drill
- Harrows
- Baler
- Sprayer
- Rollers
- Mower

When you visit the farm, we will explain what these machines do and you may see some of them working in the fields and farm yard.

