

Midlands Group Visit - 2008

A maize maze, cows and goat burgers

Mark Tripney reports on a Nuffield Scholar farm visit with a difference - 'A real family affair! at Ed Dale's family farm near Congleton.

Nuffield Scholars and their families gathered at the Maze Maize of the Udder Farm Company in August. The maze (see below) is located on part of Ed Dales family farm, near Congleton, and the company is run in partnership between the Tripney and Dale families.

The main enterprise on the farm is the two dairy herds, split between spring and autumn calvers. At present, the cows number 550 milking, but this is set to expand with the purchase of the neighbouring farm and will see the herd size grow to 800 plus.

All cows and youngstock are reared to suit the grass-based system, with the cows remaining outside as long as possible during the year. Systems are kept simple on the farm, with basic high throughput parlours and concrete-sleepered tracks enabling cows to return to the fields quickly to maximise grazing time.

The maze is in its second year and is aiming to attract 10,000 visitors this year. The design of the butterfly was inspired by the partnership with Butterfly Conservation, who celebrate their 40th year in 2008. Part of the aim of the project is to inform the public on what goes on in the countryside.

Much to the delight of all the youngsters, families boarded the trailer used by the maze to take visitors on a tour. They thought they were on for a great ride, not realising that they would have to listen to Ed talk about cows at various points along the way.

Back at the Maze the children, young and old, disappeared to have a go in the maze, or peddle the gokarts, before all tucked into pork sausages and goat burgers supplied by Tim and Marnie Dobson.

All enjoyed the relaxed fine summer evening with kids appearing whenever they wanted anything. A Nuffield day with a difference!

Mark Tripney

