



NUFFIELD  
Farming Scholarships

# The disconnection in beef eating quality in the UK

*Written by:*

Gwion Richard Parry NSch

**November 2025**

A NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS REPORT

**Royal Welsh Agricultural Society**



## **NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS TRUST (UK)**

**Awarding life changing Scholarships that unlock individual potential and broaden horizons through study and travel overseas, with a view to developing farming and agricultural industries.**

### **"Leading positive change in agriculture"**

"Nuffield Farming" study awards give a unique opportunity to stand back from your day-to-day occupation and to research a subject of interest to you. Academic qualifications are not essential, but you will need to persuade the Selection Committee that you have the qualities to make the best use of an opportunity that is given to only a few – approximately 20 each year.

Scholarships are open to those who work in farming, food, horticulture, rural and associated industries or are in a position to influence these industries. You must be a resident in the UK. Applicants must be aged between 25 and 45 years (the upper age limit is 45 on 31st July in the year of application).

There is no requirement for academic qualifications, but applicants will already be well established in their career and demonstrate a passion for the industry they work in and be three years post tertiary education. Scholarships are not awarded to anyone in full-time education or to further research projects.

Full details of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships can be seen on the Trust's website: [www.nuffieldscholar.org](http://www.nuffieldscholar.org). Application forms can be downloaded and only online submission is accepted.

Closing date for completed applications is the 31<sup>st</sup> July each year.

Copyright © Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust

ISBN: 978-1-916850-63-7

Published by The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust  
Bullbrook, West Charlton, Charlton Mackrell, Somerset, TA11 7AL  
Email: [office@nuffieldscholar.org](mailto:office@nuffieldscholar.org)  
[www.nuffieldscholar.org](http://www.nuffieldscholar.org)

# A NUFFIELD FARMING SCHOLARSHIPS REPORT (UK)



NUFFIELD  
Farming Scholarships

Date of report: 09/2025

*"Leading positive change in agriculture.  
Inspiring passion and potential in people."*

Title	The disconnection in beef eating quality in the UK
Scholar	Gwion Richard Parry
Sponsor	Royal Welsh Agricultural Society
Objectives of Study Tour	The objective of this report was to understand the disconnection between beef production, grading, and retailing in the UK. By examining systems in South America, Australia, and New Zealand, the study aimed to compare approaches to eating quality, consistency and marketing. The goal was to identify lessons that could help the UK deliver a more premium and trusted beef product.
Countries Visited	Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Australia, New Zealand, UK
Messages	<p>This report has 5 main messages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UK's EUROP grid prioritises yield, not eating quality, leading to inconsistent consumer experiences.</li> <li>• International systems (MSA, USDA) prove that grading linked to eating quality builds trust and repeat purchases.</li> <li>• UK supermarkets often undersell beef as a premium product, with weak presentation and limited labelling.</li> <li>• Consumer confidence is vital: one poor eating experience can deter repeat purchases for weeks.</li> <li>• To stay competitive, the UK must shift towards an eating-quality-based system supported by better marketing.</li> </ul>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beef eating quality in the UK is inconsistent and poorly communicated to consumers. The EUROP grid, our primary grading system, measures carcass conformation, fat cover, and weight, focusing on yield rather than tenderness, flavour, or marbling. Internationally, grading systems prioritise the eating experience: Australia's Meat Standards Australia (MSA) evaluates marbling, ossification, pH, fat depth, ageing, cut, and cooking method, while the US USDA system - Select, Choice, Prime - gives consumers a clear indication of expected quality. These systems incentivise producers to deliver consistent, high-quality beef, building consumer trust and allowing premium pricing. In contrast, UK consumers receive little guidance beyond cut and weight, which rarely correlate with actual eating quality.

During my Nuffield study tour to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Australia, and New Zealand, I observed how both grading and marketing shape consumer perception. Australian and US retailers present beef with clear quality signals, educating customers on how to cook and enjoy each cut. In South America, beef is celebrated culturally, with presentation and experience central to the meal, reinforcing the link between product and enjoyment. UK supermarkets, by contrast, often treat beef as a commodity: premium cuts sit in shrink-wrapped plastic alongside cheaper meats, offering no differentiation or reassurance of quality. This lack of clarity undermines loyalty, as a poor eating experience can prevent repeat purchases for weeks.

Cost of production in the UK tends to be higher than other countries, so prices at retail are also higher, yet inconsistent eating quality diminishes value for consumers. To compete on both domestic and global stages, we must shift focus from yield to quality. Grading systems should reward traits that drive eating experience, while marketing must communicate these benefits clearly, educating consumers and justifying the higher prices we seek here. Supermarkets and retailers have a crucial role in elevating the customer experience, from product presentation to cooking guidance.

In short, the UK cannot compete on price alone; we must compete on quality and consistency. By aligning grading, production, and marketing, British beef can backup its position as a premium product, delivering a trusted, enjoyable experience that incentivises producers, satisfies consumers, and secures long-term market loyalty. The lesson from abroad is clear: consistency, transparency, and consumer education are the keys to sustaining a thriving, high-quality beef industry in the UK.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Background to my study subject.....	3
Chapter 3: My study tour .....	5
Chapter 4: Current situation in the UK.....	6
4.1 Beef Consumption.....	7
4.2 Beef Marketing.....	9
4.3 Beef Grading.....	11
Chapter 5: Conclusion .....	13
Chapter 6: Recommendations .....	14
Chapter 7: After my study tour .....	15
Chapter 8: Acknowledgement and thanks .....	16
Appendix 1: References.....	18
Appendix 2: Personal Highlight .....	19

## **DISCLAIMER**

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author alone and not necessarily those of the Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust, of the author's sponsor, or of any other sponsoring body.

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

Gwion Richard Parry

Pwllheli, Gwynedd, Wales, UK

gwionbodgaea@hotmail.co.uk

Nuffield Farming Scholars are available to speak to NFU Branches, agricultural discussion groups and similar organisations.

*Published by The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust  
Bullbrook, West Charlton, Charlton Mackrell, Somerset, TA11 7AL  
email : [office@nuffieldscholar.org](mailto:office@nuffieldscholar.org)  
[www.nuffieldscholar.org](http://www.nuffieldscholar.org)*



## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



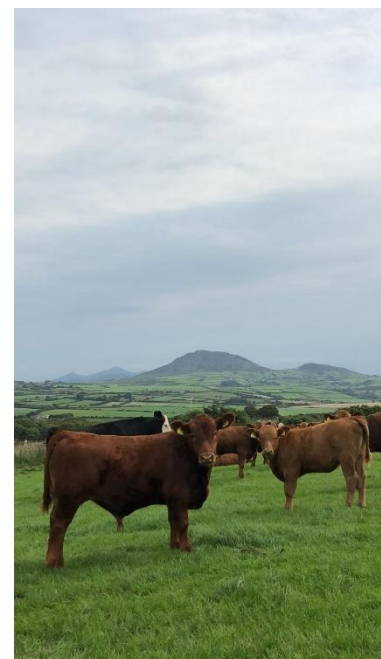
**Figure 1: the author scanning a beef cow (author's photo)**

I grew up on a family farm on the Llyn Peninsula, North Wales, where we farmed an early lambing flock, and a pedigree Stabiliser suckler herd. Naturally, growing up on a farm in a very rural community with strong Welsh traditions, my interest in farming was instant.

After school, and deciding against doing A-Levels, I went to study Agriculture BTEC at Glynllifon where my interest in the wider agricultural grew, and I started to think about careers other than farming within the industry. I continued to Abersytwyth where I studied Agriculture and Business Studies, which led me to my first job with Farming Connect after a 9 month stint working as shepherd and general farm worker on a couple of farms in New Zealand.

In 2020, after a couple of enjoyable years with Farming Connect facilitating projects on the red meat demonstration farms, I decided to try my hand at sales, which I was awful at, and vowed not to work for anyone else for while. This time gave me the opportunity to spend more time on the family farm and also to train as an ultrasound technician, scanning for marbling fat depth and rib eye area in cattle. After passing the UK accreditation as licensed scanner, I soon realised that the technology used here in the UK was outdated, unsustainable due to technology being 30+ years old and, in fact, impossible to get your hands on as they weren't 'off the shelf'.

I needed to find an alternative, so in the beginning of 2023, I flew to Fort Collins, Colorado, to visit a company called Ultrainsights who boasted having the most accurate system in terms of measuring marbling in live animals. After 3 days of being introduced to the system, I purchased an ultrasound machine with the help of the Stabiliser Cattle Company. The scanning work is seasonal, meaning I have more time to practically farm at home; it has also given me the opportunity to purchase a small organic dairy herd and start a contract farming agreement, sitting alongside the beef and sheep enterprises at home.



**Figure 2: DESCRIBE THIS (author's photo)**



Time off farm is very important for me as some days the farm can seem like the whole world, whereas in fact there is so much of this planet easily accessible to us these days. A Nuffield Farming Scholarship makes the planet even smaller and incredibly accessible.



## CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND TO MY STUDY SUBJECT

Beef eating quality is always a headline: some vow to have mastered it, some argue blindly over how to define it, and some, well, some couldn't care less, but either way it's always shouted about. Whether it's sold to you under a sexy name like 'prime', grass-fed, high marbling or regenerative, it has somewhat lost its credibility as it is defined in so many different ways by so many different people. To some extent, eating quality is defined by the consumer's personal preference, so it's fine that people have such different definitions of it. The trouble is, though, all these differences are only fine within the marketplace

Post-Brexit new trade deals have emerged, meaning we no longer compete against farmers who follow the same rules and regulations or, more importantly for beef producers, compete against the same grading systems. Australia's MSA grading system and the USDA concentrates on the potential eating experience of that carcass, which means farmers are financially incentivised to produce cattle that have high eating quality. Makes sense, right? There have been multiple Nuffield Scholars before me who have studied this topic, all of whom concluded that the EUROP grid grading system needed a revamp or to be replaced.

It is no secret that Australia and US and other countries can produce cheaper beef than we can in the UK, although this is also influenced by the strength of the GBP£, but it was always accepted because 'we produced the best': we had the highest welfare regulation, a complete ban on growth hormones, stricter antibiotic regulations, the 30 month rule and a big push on grass-fed beef. All of these factors contributed to the marketability of our beef, and some also might affect the eating quality, but as the EUROP grid doesn't take this into consideration, eating quality has never been on the forefront of priorities for farmers.

The worry now is that not only can other nations produce cheaper beef than us, but they may actually produce more consistent beef of better eating quality. Now the question is, how long would customers' loyalty to 'Buy British' last if they can buy tastier, cheaper and more consistent beef off the same shelf? AHDB reports that consumers can take up to 12 weeks to return to a specific cut of beef after a bad experience (see appendix for reference) so if we can't compete on the consistency part, we'll soon become second fiddle on our own shelves. I'm not going to sit and write this report - nor did I go on my travels - claiming that the best beef is produced in Britain, as simply we do not have the measuring tools, the data, or any evidence to suggest so.

The biggest influence on myself to study this topic was the fact that I work with many progressive suckler breeders who select for marbling, fat depth and rib eye area, all because they have a thriving passion to produce the best product they



can for their processors and ultimately their customers, the public. They do this with no economic gain other than some genetic improvements which benefit eating quality and animal efficiency such as fat depth. I also find myself in this same boat with our pedigree herd.



## CHAPTER 3: MY STUDY TOUR

Where	When	Why
Brazil	November 2024	There is no argument that Brazil is a major player and soon to be the biggest beef producer, so it was only natural to visit and see how they prepare to compete with the rest of the world with eating quality.
Uruguay	November 2024	Uruguay have to compete with their bigger neighbours. They boast that they produce higher eating quality beef and about their production efficiency.
Argentina	November 2024	Argentina, like Brazil, is a huge player in global beef markets, and famously consumes more beef per capita than any other country in the world.
Chile	November 2024	I went to Chile to investigate how it compared to other Latin American countries, whilst not having the same domestic steak culture.
Australia	December 2024	Australia boasts one of the best grading systems in the world, with eating quality in the forefront of their priorities.
New Zealand	December 2024	New Zealand produce is a very strong brand globally, whilst not boasting an actual beef grading system. I went to Hawkes Bay to meet up with beef producers and breeders.



## CHAPTER 4: CURRENT SITUATION IN THE UK

When I was awarded my Nuffield Farming Scholarship back in November 2023, all prime beef average price in the UK was at 478.5p/kg; now at the time of writing this report, it sits just shy of 700p/kg. This leads me to wonder if this is actually the time for change, as it is 'anything goes' when food is scarce. The prices were driven by the lack of cattle, but it led to a tidal wave of cattle: cattle which were always destined for slaughter pushed to finish earlier, or moved on to expert finishers. Even more worrying was a wave of potential breeding females being slaughtered for a quick buck, as people read the headline prices, which will lead to a shortage of animals again next year and in the future.

However, I highly doubt the processors and supermarkets will be caught out again: they have access to new sources and potentially cheaper ones. We have already experienced an increase in supermarkets owning their own supply, with numerous integrated beef programmes established and becoming very popular, as avoiding the initial outlay on buying cattle to fatten and having some reassurance of a profit margin is very desirable. Yet it does seem a bit like we as farmers have lost a bit of independence. All of these new insecurities have led me to believe that now more than ever is when we should start treating beef like what it is, a treat, the most expensive thing on every menu, an eating experience, rather than a cheap commodity because if we go down that road we are going to lose everytime.

There is a consensus that the UK population have beef sold to them rather than them making decision on what to buy. This may be down to the fact that the average person does not know what to look for when purchasing a steak: which cut, what key words to look for, or it simply might be down to the price, more expensive meaning better and vice versa. However, I suspect that it is down to the fact that there isn't that much information shared with the public on what makes a great eating quality steak. No detailed labelling, no cooking instructions, we simply get the cut, the weight, the price and that is it. The premium steaks have a bit more information - dry-aged, grass-fed - and sometimes you'll get the breed - mostly Aberdeen Angus - but none of this actually means much to consumers. We farmers, or people who are more involved with agriculture, understand that dry-aged means a more tender steak, sometimes more flavoursome, and we associate Angus with a higher marbled product, but apart from that, it's not giving us much.

The top factors which affect eating qualities are as follows:

1. Time in layerage
2. Hormone supplements
3. Precense of Bos Indicus bloodline
4. Marbling %



5. Ossification (age of animal)
6. Ageing of meat
7. Cooking method

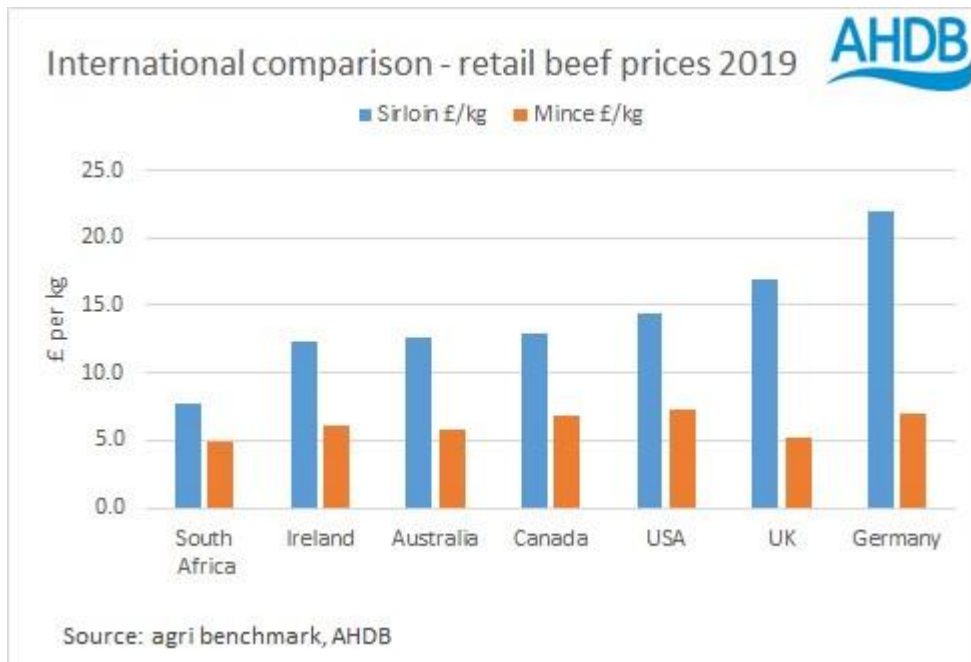
The first 3 aren't really relevant for us here in the UK, as animals do not need to travel large distances to slaughter houses as they do in other countries. Growth hormone supplements have been banned in the UK since 1989 and there aren't any Bos Indicus cattle bloodlines in UK herds. Therefore we are at an advantage that we can dismiss the top 3 factors that have a negative effect on meat eating quality. Surely we should be able to get a more consistent product, then?

Absolutely NOT: the UK market does not ask for these things, it asks for yield.

If the population of the UK were to all go vegetarian overnight, I really struggle to believe we could survive as an export nation when it comes to beef. Gone would be the loyalty of native consumers wanting to buy British. We would be head to head with the USA and Australian products, where they have been incentivising farmers to select and manage animals from birth to become a quality eating experience, what consumers want plays a role in every decision on how to manage that animal. We would end up competing on yield, and price, which would be another story altogether.

## 4.1 Beef Consumption

Beef consumption in the UK is on the way down, and has been for decades. Since 1980, consumption has fallen by nearly 10kg per capita annually in the UK from 14.5kgs to 5.0Kgs in 2022. Contributing factors are the BSE outbreak before the turn of the millennia, and then of course the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the early 2000s (see appendix for reference). However, an increasing amount of meat falls under ready meals, pies and canned products. How beef is bought and consumed plays a huge role in total beef sold; a typical 450g pack of mince would easily feed 4-6 people in a dish such as bolognese, whilst in comparison if everyone around the table would have your usual 8oz steak or beef roasting joint, the beef consumption of that meal would double. This has been driven by eating habit change and the time people want to spend prepping and cooking meals, especially with the quality of ready meals now on offer and the advanced technology such as air fryers. This is also being driven by the price.



**Figure 3. AHDB international comparison of the cost of trading up from mince to steak**

This graph shows how much extra shoppers would need to spend to swap the mince in their trolley to sirloin steak. UK shoppers would need to triple their money to upgrade to a sirloin, whilst in Australia you'd only need to double it. Thus, combined with the fact that you'd typically need more grams per person per meal, mince is always going to come out on top.

I always knew this to be the fact but had never seen it first hand until my visit to South America. I travelled Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina and for those 24 days I ate steak every lunch and dinner, not because I was visiting steakhouses and not because I was researching beef, but because the frankly overwhelming amount of steak eaten is the norm in these countries. Assados were happening at every mealtime. I was helping one of my hosts in Argentina to cultivate fields ready for wheat one day, and for lunch another tractor operator simply dug a hole in the



**Figure 4. Assado for a quick lunch (author's photo)**

ground, filled it with sticks and set them alight; then from his tractor's toolbox he brought out an iron grill and a carrier bag of beef, short ribs, picanha, beef sausages, and a dry piece of bread and there was our lunch. This lunch would have cost £40/50 in beef if I were to emulate it at home here in Wales, and that's if the weather would allow it. Because of the hefty price tag, eating premium beef cuts has become something only for a special occasion, and even then, it needs to compete against the consistent eating quality of cheaper meats such as chicken and pork.



## 4.2 Beef Marketing

Beef roasting joints and steaks are a luxury product in the UK and account for a high percentage of the cost of a household's weekly shop when purchased, which is understandable, given our cost of production is higher than other countries and margins are tight. However, because of this, it is essential that consumers have an excellent experience when buying and eating these prime cuts to justify the cost to our customers. The consumers' experience starts the moment they go out to purchase their cut.

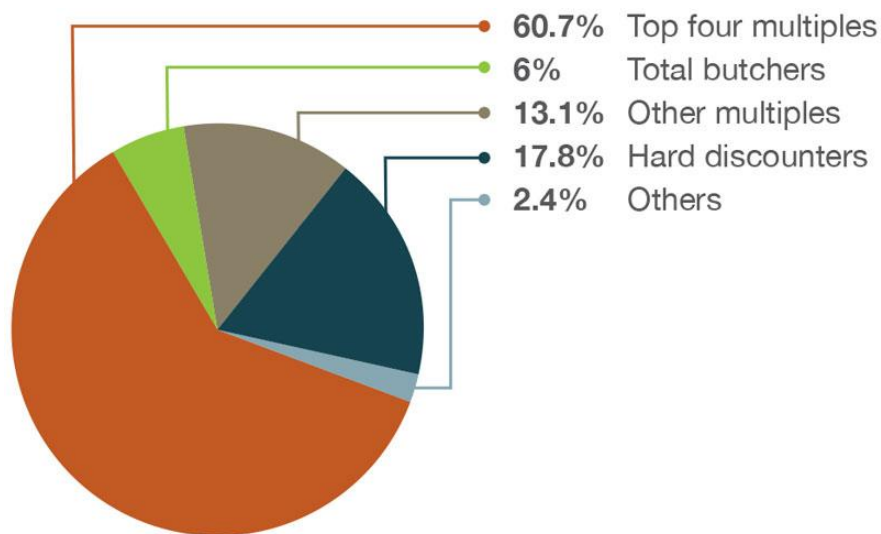


Figure 1. English prime beef – Retail volume share 2017 (% tonnes)

Source: AHDB

### Figure 5. Pie Chart of where beef is purchased by consumers in the UK

Approximately two thirds of the beef sold in England goes through supermarkets. This is mostly down to the convenience of only having to visit one establishment to buy everything you need, but also down to price competitiveness due to scale. The average weekly grocery shop for a family of 4 in the UK is £117, so the purchase of a roasting joint for one meal or 4 steaks can be between 16 and 25% of the total weekly cost.

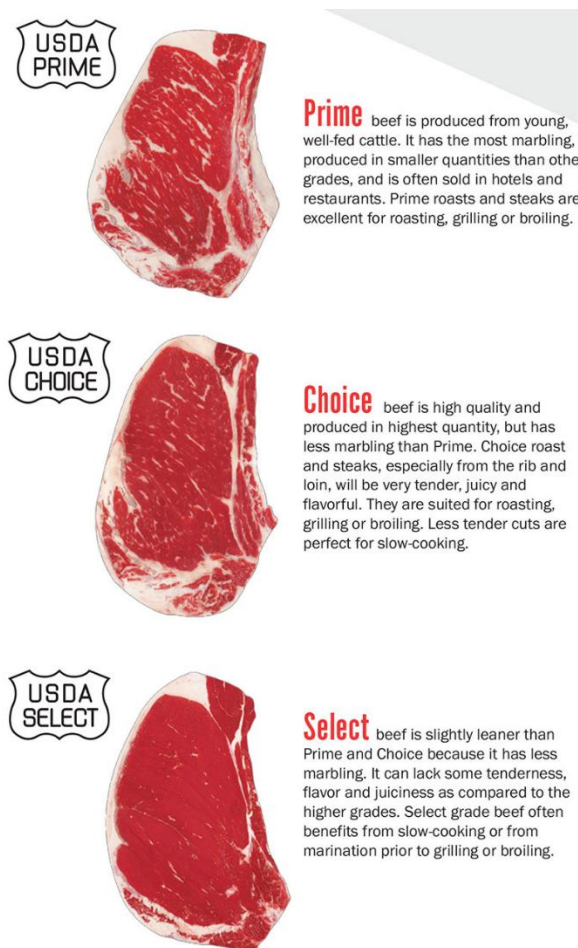
As I travelled, I realised that on top of the increased number of specialised meat retailers, the beef aisle of supermarkets in other countries tended to be better presented. In most meat retailers, beef was



Figure 6. Owner of De Betti Butchers and Restaunt in Sao Paulo (author's photo)



showcased as they would be in premium butcheries here in the UK. Meat was often sold on a counter, cornered off in supermarkets, with full sides of beef hung and cut before you: buying beef was a separate ritual to buying other products. Here in the UK we see meat being treated as any other refrigerated product, stacked on shelves in abundance in shrink wrapped plastic, not really drawing people in, and not being showcased any differently than chicken, which is a fraction of the price. Meat had its own section at retailers in South America, a butchery expertly showcasing beef in all its glory. When you went in, you felt like you were purchasing a premium product, a product of higher status than everything else in the store. Then you had the have the information available. I feel that the packaging in the UK offers very little to customers. We see terminology such as 28 day dry aged, organic, grass-fed and the Red Tractor logo on packaging here in the UK, but how many of the general public understand what all these means? None of these terms, other than 28 days dry aged, gives an idea to the customer of the actual eating quality of the cut or information on how to cook and prepare the meat. I feel we are missing a trick. In the US, they have eating quality grade for their beef in supermarket: Select, Choice and Prime.



As shown in Figure 7, the differences between grades are clearly explained, offering customers advice on how to get the best out of these products whilst cooking. This helps to maintain consistency. It allows people to know exactly what to expect from their meat and make decisions about how to cook and prepare it. And when people decide to fork out and upgrade to the Prime beef, they can expect an increase in eating quality. Back in the UK, this can't really be guaranteed when you are upgrading from the cheapest ranges to the premium ranges. Even if you look out for marbling content, note if there is any gristle, or look for the amount of fat cover, there is a huge variation in how steaks look on the shelves in the UK, even though they are sold under the same label. I still get caught out and left disappointed with the eating quality. The USDA grading system means

**Figure 7. Infographic explaining the differences between different types of beef classifications in USA, (image from USDA government website)**

every carcass is graded solely on eating quality regardless of what it is. Animal



age, gender, carcass weight, conformation and fat class is what determines its quality in the UK whilst this doesn't provide much indication to the eating quality. The eating quality of a carcass is determined by so many factors that a lot more other than these needs to be measured to give consistency. From my work measuring marbling % in animals, I have seen first hand identical animals which both will go into the same product and sold as the same yet they have vast differences in marbling content.

Customers do not want and do not have the time to study every steak they buy; they appreciate a label that identifies the best quality products from the lower quality. The US population have a reliable labelling system that offers this, and with the average consumer taking 12 weeks to buy a product again after a bad eating experience, it is crucial that we do this in the UK and not just some superficial slogans such as 'Finest' and 'Taste the Difference' which have no bearing on that cut's eating quality (see appendix for reference).

### 4.3 Beef Grading

Country/Region	System	What It Measures	Main Focus
UK / EU	EUROP Grid	Carcass conformation (shape), fat cover, weight	Yield and efficiency, not eating quality
Australia	Meat Standards Australia (MSA)	Marbling %, ossification (maturity), pH, fat depth, meat ageing, cut type, cooking method	Eating quality and consistency
United States	USDA (Select, Choice, Prime)	Intramuscular fat (marbling), maturity, meat colour and texture	Tenderness, juiciness, flavour (consumer eating experience)
Japan	Japanese Meat Grading Association (JMGA) / Wagyu BMS	Yield grade (A–C), Beef Marbling Score (1–12), meat colour/brightness, fat colour/lustre, firmness & texture	Ultra-premium eating quality (marbling, tenderness, appearance)

**Figure 8. Table of different beef grading systems around the world, what they measure and their main focus (table by author)**

Beef eating quality is one of those topics that always sparks debate. Some say they've cracked it, others argue over the best definition, and plenty of people simply don't care. But when you strip it back, the grading system a country uses is what ties production to the consumer's plate. In the UK, we still rely on the EUROP grid, which measures conformation and fat class – basically yield. The



problem is, yield doesn't tell you how a steak will eat, and that's where other nations have taken huge strides ahead of us.

Australia probably leads the way with its Meat Standards Australia (MSA) system. It's a science-backed grading framework that predicts the eating experience of each cut based on dozens of factors: marbling, ossification (age of the animal), pH, fat depth, and even the cooking method. Every carcass is graded with eating quality in mind, and producers are financially rewarded for delivering beef that guarantees consumer satisfaction. It's no coincidence that Australian beef enjoys a strong reputation globally for consistency.

The United States has its USDA grading, which most consumers recognise: Select, Choice, and Prime. At the heart of it is marbling, which is strongly correlated with tenderness and flavour. Prime, with the most intramuscular fat, is marketed as the highest eating experience, while Select is leaner but less reliable on quality. What stands out in the US system is how visible and simple the grades are for customers – a clear, trusted label that links straight back to what you'll taste on your plate. For supermarkets and restaurants, this makes it easier to manage consistency, while producers know there is a premium to be had if they aim for higher grades.

South America, meanwhile, is a different story. Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay are massive beef exporters, but grading systems are patchier. Argentina, with its strong steak culture, has traditionally relied less on formal grading and more on heritage, breed, and tradition to sell beef. If only it would be easy to create a similar beef eating culture over here in the UK, with major media sources openly doing the opposite, pushing for less consumption of red meat. Uruguay has been pushing quality more aggressively, introducing traceability and eating quality as marketing points, partly to compete with their larger neighbour Brazil. Brazil itself, being one of the biggest players globally, tends to focus on volume and price competitiveness, but with growing international demand they are having to adapt and pay more attention to eating quality.

New Zealand sits somewhere between the Australian model and our own. There is strong focus on grass-fed and natural production systems, which are attractive selling points internationally, but the grading itself doesn't always go as deep into eating quality as the MSA. Still, New Zealand beef often benefits from its image of purity and sustainability, even if the consistency isn't as tightly managed.

And then there's the UK, where the EUROP grid still rules. It doesn't measure marbling, ossification, or meat ageing – the very traits that drive eating quality. We reward carcasses for yield and shape, not for taste or tenderness. The danger is that while we cling to a system designed decades ago, other nations are producing beef that is not only cheaper but better to eat. Consumers are loyal only up to a point, and once they get used to more consistent, tastier alternatives, the UK's reputation could quickly slip.

If we are serious about competing on a global stage, the lesson from abroad is simple: grading must reflect eating quality, not just yield. Consistency and consumer trust are everything.



## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Everyone is aware of beef eating quality, and there are premium schemes everywhere, mostly basic schemes that consider sire breed, age weight and conformation. This is not good enough; we need to measure more in depth.

Marbling is around 45% heritable, and pedigree breeders throughout the UK are already recording for it with no incentive to do so, why don't we market this data?

Consistency is key, but how can we get consistency by only grading on age, sex, conformation and fat class?

Beef is a commodity in which we cannot compete on price or numbers; we need to be the best and have a USP, as we are selling to the public not to other farmers.

Supermarkets and retailers need to appreciate that beef - especially steaks - is a high percentage of weekly shops for their customers, and perhaps treat it as such, focusing on better presentation, better labelling, and ways to educate shoppers, and improve their experience of purchasing beef, so that they get more than a slab of meat for their hard earned money.



## CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

Scrap the EUROP Grid grading system and adopt a system more suited to what we produce here in the UK which will drive eating quality and highlight the best traits of the British beef industry. This will both incentivise producers as well make procurement easier for retailers.

Accept that UK produced beef needs to be a premium product to compete on the global market and treat it as such. We should aim to improve the whole experience of eating beef, from purchasing it at a retailer or supermarket to advising on cooking methods and educating consumers about the difference between cuts. This will help in justifying the price of beef to customers.

Prioritise consistency: it is impossible to get eating quality consistency if you do not measure any characteristics that influence the eating quality. One bad steak is all it takes to turn someone off. Eating quality is largely subjective and down to personal preference and taste, but a poor carcass will never be high eating quality. It must start with getting rid of the bad.

Incentivise not penalise. Beef consumption is decreasing every year, so there isn't really anything to lose by making changes. All producers would gladly adapt if it meant that what they are producing is seen as a quality, highly regarded product. The pride in producing food and farming is very high in the UK, and we already boast and can back up our meat welfare and traceability, but we cannot, as things stand, back up our claims about eating quality.



## CHAPTER 7: AFTER MY STUDY TOUR

After my study tour, my feet barely touched the ground. I went straight into scanning season, lambing season, calving season and then got married on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May, all whilst renovating a chapel to be our marital home. This resulted in very little time for reflection of what an amazing experience those 9 weeks of travel were.

During my travel I visited so many different cultures and ways of life. I have never felt so far away from home as I did at the bottom of the Amazon Basin, with very few Portuguese words and no one around speaking English. The sheer isolation of the location led me to admire these people's resilience, adaptability and their overpowering ability to be content with what they had, something which maybe we miss in UK Agriculture.

On a more topic related note, the increased beef price and higher confidence in the market has led to more pedigree breeders getting their animals scanned for marbling, fat depth and eye muscle area. Even more excitingly, however, was being contacted by a major retailer and processor to start measuring marbling at farm level, to try and pursue a more consistent high eating quality end product.

Moving forward I'm going to continue developing the home farm and the scanning business whilst learning to become more content.



## CHAPTER 8: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND THANKS

Sponsor:- As with every Nuffield Scholarship, the biggest thanks and gratitude goes out to my sponsor the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, for supporting my scholarship and offering me a truly once in a lifetime experience.

Family:- No travel scholarship would be possible without a top notch support group at home, and I'm very privileged with mine. My thanks goes to Elin my wife, who let me travel the globe whilst in the middle of wedding preparations and was a constant voice of reason encouraging me to embrace this wonderful opportunity throughout. My parents and in-laws deserve recognition for making sure that I felt as guilt-free as possible whilst travelling and ensuring I knew that the farm was in capable hands.

Brazil:- Thanks go also to Flavio Andrade, Lenoardo Prandini, Julia Cristina and Joso Alexandre, for taking time out of their very busy schedules to not only prepare one for me but to accompany me on some insightful visits whilst translating throughout.

Uruguay:- Thanks to João Antônio for linking me up with the most welcoming people during my time in Uruguay. And to one of my hosts Julio Taborda for showcasing a simply outstanding suckler cow enterprise.

Argentina:- Thanks to Santi Martinez for his hospitality and his time organising interesting visits. A future scholar already contributing to this global network.

Chile:- Team Nuffield Chile really pulled the cat out of the bag, both showcasing the impressive resilience of businesses as well as the stunning landscape the country boasts, with special mentions to Jose Manuel, Antonio Bunster, and Dario.

Australia:- Thanks to Treen and Mark Swift, Jack Courts and Tim Houston for pointing me in the right directions for very topic related visits and for hosting me and letting me experience the reality of farming and living in Australia.

New Zealand:- Thanks to Ryan and Nic Foley for letting me treat their house as a hotel for the two days I spent in the country and also a big thanks to the Rissington brothers for showing me around their breeding enterprise.

Last but not least these past two years wouldn't have been as amazing as they have been without the other people in my cohort, from our first meeting in Exeter to the pre-CSC and CSC in London and Brazil, true friendships and camaraderie have started. Having 22 other people going through the same challenges a Nuffield Scholarship presents was really reassuring and I'm very grateful to them for the support.





## APPENDIX 1: REFERENCES

*Red meat consumption in the UK continues to decline - AHDB (2024).*

[https://www.thecattlesite.com/news/red-meat-consumption-in-the-uk-continues-to-decline-](https://www.thecattlesite.com/news/red-meat-consumption-in-the-uk-continues-to-decline-ahdb#:~:text=Beef%20experienced%20the%20most%20cut,offering%20convenience%20and%20value%20credentials.)

[ahdb#:~:text=Beef%20experienced%20the%20most%20cut,offering%20convenience%20and%20value%20credentials.](https://www.thecattlesite.com/news/red-meat-consumption-in-the-uk-continues-to-decline-ahdb#:~:text=Beef%20experienced%20the%20most%20cut,offering%20convenience%20and%20value%20credentials.)

*Beef cattle: Understanding the market (no date).* [https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/beef-cattle-understanding-the-market.](https://ahdb.org.uk/knowledge-library/beef-cattle-understanding-the-market)



## APPENDIX 2: PERSONAL HIGHLIGHT



**Figure 9. Personal highlight of travel, stumbling across a village of indigenous people, at the base of the Amazon Basin (photo by author)**



978-1-916850-63-7

Copyright © Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust

ISBN: 978-1-916850-63-7

Published by The Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust  
Bullbrook, West Charlton, Charlton Mackrell, Somerset, TA11 7AL  
Email: [office@nuffieldscholar.org](mailto:office@nuffieldscholar.org)  
[www.nuffieldscholar.org](http://www.nuffieldscholar.org)