

Latest News from RSPCA Assured

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Your pig update

from RSPCA Assured



Welcome to your festive newsletter

By Joe Bailey, Head of Farming



It's been a year of bad news and perhaps it doesn't seem right to celebrate but we should, as now more than ever there is much to be proud of.

So let's start with a positive, RSPCA Assured festive products have scooped up a whopping 28 awards and accolades in this year's taste tests for best supermarket Christmas food.

Unsurprisingly, RSPCA Assured pork products have been acknowledged. For more information on the awards, read the following article. Hooray to everyone who has produced them, sold them, and will get to enjoy

them!

RSPCA Assured, now in its 27th year, has more than 24.3 million animals on the scheme, plus many millions of salmon and trout. There is a growing trend for higher welfare products, with nearly 70% of families and young professionals recognising our logo and trusting what it stands for. The public has a real interest in how and where animals are reared.

As we celebrate this anniversary of helping to improve farm animal welfare, we're continuing to see an increased demand for higher welfare pork from both businesses and the general public, which is testament to the hard work and dedication of all members.

We have some truly fantastic producers on the scheme, who are committed to raising the bar for UK agriculture, and we hope to see more join next year.

Golly gosh it's been a strange year for everyone but, as always, the farming community has triumphed. I'm incredibly proud of the resilience, dedication and determination you've all shown to adapt to the circumstances not only around COVID-19 but also Brexit, whilst, still ensuring the animals you care for are treated with respect and compassion.

I wish you a very Merry Christmas... and I hope for a better, less stressful, and far happier 2021 for everybody.




RSPCA Assured festive products scoop 28 top awards and accolades, including nine for pork

By Rebecca Lenik, Public Relations Manager

From traditional turkeys and pigs in blankets to gin-infused smoked salmon and whisky and orange stuffing parcels, RSPCA Assured labelled supermarket foods have bagged a whopping 28 awards and recognitions in taste tests this Christmas.

These prestigious wins and recommendations come from leading food and glossy magazines; BBC Good Food, Good Housekeeping, Olive and Woman and Home, as well as the much-coveted Quality Food Awards.

For more information about all of this year's award-winning RSPCA Assured products and a guide to having a higher-welfare Christmas, click [here](#).

	Smoked salmon	Other fish product	Sausages/pigs in blankets	Sausage meat/stuffing	Bacon	Other pork product	Turkey whole	Turkey crown	Other turkey product	Chicken product
Aldi	✓	✓					✓	✓		
Asda							✓	✓		
Coop	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Lidl	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Morrisons							✓			
Sainsburys	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Tesco	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓

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National Pig Awards 2020

By Jeremy Costello, Junior Public Relations Executive

Congratulations to all winners, and those shortlisted, at the National Pig Awards 2020, which were held via a live-stream on Monday 16 November. The seventh edition of the awards highlighted the tremendous work being done by individuals and businesses across the pig industry.

Mark Robertson, Senior Assessor and species lead for pigs at RSPCA Assured, is keen to praise all RSPCA Assured members who were acknowledged at the event as he says:

"I'm pleased that so many of the award winners were RSPCA Assured members. It's great to see higher welfare farming receive recognition. In what has been a difficult year for everyone, the event was a nice way to celebrate the success of our members."

RSPCA Assured Winners - National Pig Awards 2020

Wayland Farms - Outdoor Pig Producer of the Year

Paul Howland (BQP) - Finisher of the Year

RC Mellor (BQP) - Herd Productivity Award

Dawid Wawrowski (Karro) - Stockman of the Year

Susanne Mustard (Karro) - Trainee of the Year

Iwona Rosa (Norfolk Free Range) - Unit Manager of the Year Award

Josh Brewster (North Farm Livestock) - Young Pig Farmer of the Year

Lee Thompson (Wayland) - Special Achievement Award

Yorkshire Farmers Marketing - NPA Allied Member Award

Wayland Farms - Pig Producer of the Year

For more information on all winners, [click here](#).

Salesforce update

By Liam Kurzeja, Head of Marketing



This past year, I've led a project to implement a leading customer relationship management database called Salesforce.

The new system will replace our existing membership database. It will provide RSPCA Assured members with a time-efficient, accessible and more personal experience. Unfortunately, due to the unforeseen circumstances of Covid-19, we were delayed piloting the live system.

However, after a short hold up, I'm pleased to announce that we've almost completed the second stage of our live pilot. Our in-house IT administrator and Salesforce partner are in the process of ironing out any final kinks in the system.

We're well on course to roll out Salesforce to our members through 2021. That being said, some species may have to wait on the progress of the mobile app being developed for RSPCA Assured assessors carrying out their on-farm assessments. However, I'm delighted to say this app is in full development, looks fantastic, and we hope to be in a position to pilot it early next year.

Thank you to those who've provided feedback and, or, participated directly in the pilot and app development to date.

Pig reflection

By Mark Robertson, Senior Assessor and species lead for pigs



What an unbelievable year! The pig industry, as a whole, has done so well to cope with the challenges of COVID-19. Despite the difficulties, I'm pleased that supermarket sales of pork have been good.

We've seen a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 in abattoirs, and we realise this has a knock-on effect, which can be challenging for planners to move pigs around.

If you're struggling, talk to us, we're not here to tell you what to do, but help us understand the difficulties you're facing.

If you are unable to meet a standard due to COVID-19, please do let us know so we can speak to our certification body to see if a derogation could be needed.

We're aware of the pressure of straw for the coming year, and it is something that is being monitored closely. In the meantime, do your best to tidy the farmyard up!

I'm so proud of some of the work you've been doing in the community. A big well done to John Harvey for supplying tents to the NHS in the first lockdown.

Despite this tough year, everyone seems to be in good spirits when I'm out visiting on-farm. It's great to catch up with lots of you, and I'm looking forward to seeing more of you next year.

The Farming Community Network: coping with change

By Glyn Evans, Regional Director for Training at The Farming Community Network

The Farming Community Network (FCN) is a voluntary organisation supporting farmers and families within the farming community. This year we celebrate its 25th anniversary of helping people through difficult times.

Over the years, farming has experienced a great deal of change, from irregular weather patterns to fluctuating market prices. There have been a fair few challenges to overcome, but farmers are resilient people.

They have a faithfulness to the land, to the welfare of their animals, and the food we eat to stay healthy. But, there are times when that resilience is tested. Sadly, more than one member of the farming community died by suicide every week in 2019.

Here at FCN, we provide free support to the whole farming community! We listen to your concerns and queries, alongside other organisations such as: [Farming Help](#), [The](#)

[Agricultural Chaplains Association](#) and rural support groups. Our [Helpline](#) is staffed daily with volunteers from 7am to 11pm, 03000 11199.

In England and Wales, we have [33 county-based groups](#) of trained volunteers who can provide face to face support. Typically, people come to us if they're experiencing poor mental wellbeing, and although we're not a mental health charity per se, our volunteers always give people time to talk through what they're feeling and signpost them to further help.

We hope to raise awareness of the stresses people face in farming, and how they have an impact on mental wellbeing. This includes helping people identify the early signs and take preventative steps to keep themselves, and others they work with or live amongst, safe. But our work goes beyond just educating; we share our understanding with policymakers who can affect agriculture and mental health.

This year, the impacts of lockdown, tiered restrictions and uncertainty about Brexit have made life unpredictable. We've experienced an unprecedented rise in calls to our [Helpline](#). But despite all of this change, our support can help you. In partnership with FarmWell, we're running a [Time to Plan](#) initiative, to help you plan ahead and better manage change.

At the end of the day, the health and happiness of us all, including the animals that are farmed, rely on the farming community. The support we provide, such as dealing with change, can benefit everyone.

For more information on how FCN can help you, [click here](#).

Desktop assessment: a two-way solution

By Dorian Cross, Field Assessment Manager



In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, this year has brought real challenges for us all in the way we work.

For our assessors, not being able to visit our members on their farms was a real disappointment. So they were really pleased to be able to return to site visits again by a mutual agreement.

As assessments are critical to the approval and continuation of certification for our members, the ability to deliver assessments remotely was adopted and has been a workable interim solution.

Notably, 'desktop' assessments have helped assessors keep pace with the timely delivery of assessments for members where site visits remain not possible.

However, this revised remote approach to assessments wouldn't have been as successful as it has been if it wasn't for the resilience, adaptability and cooperation of our members.

Until we return in full to the normality of on-site visits to farms, a huge thank you from all of our assessors and membership services team in helping remote assessments work so well.

'Get to know' species lead for pigs and Senior Assessor, Mark Robertson

By Jeremy Costello, Junior Public Relations Executive



People are at the heart of RSPCA Assured. Without the dedicated work of each individual, we couldn't keep improving the lives of farmed pigs.

To help you get to know the people that make RSPCA Assured a success, I interviewed our species lead for pigs, Senior Assessor Mark Robertson:

Why did you join the charity?

I worked as a farm manager for seven years in the education sector at an agricultural college. I'd done the job for a long-time and wanted a positive change. The role as an assessor at RSPCA Assured came up, so I applied for the position. I'm passionate about improving farm animal welfare, and it was an opportunity to really help make a difference.

What are you responsible for?

I'm now a senior assessor, so I look after the assessments of farms in East Anglia and supervise two assessors in the region. In my role, I assess pigs, chickens, turkeys, abattoirs, hauliers, hatcheries and laying hens. I specialise in and am species lead for turkeys, hatcheries, and pigs. As part of my position, I'm responsible for assisting with the health and safety aspect of being an assessor.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

Meeting farmers who are passionate about the welfare of their animals. Sometimes, you just can't get away from a farm. The producer just wants to tell you about the positive changes they've been making and the improvements they've made for the animals. I really love days like that.

What has surprised you most about working for RSPCA Assured?

How much higher the welfare standards are and more rigorous the assessment process is

for RSPCA Assured farms, compared to other farm assurance schemes. It's great that we, as an organisation, aren't ever content just to stand still but continually work to improve the lives of farmed animals. With the majority of people still choosing to eat meat, it's great to know they can choose RSPCA Assured products, which come from animals that are treated with compassion and respect.

How has Covid-19 impacted your work at RSPCA Assured?

Due to COVID-19, the farm assessments are being arranged on a mutual consent basis. For me, in the East of England, I'm still mostly out on farms. However, if an assessor or RSPCA Assured member is uncomfortable with the visit, we will conduct the assessment remotely via a live video link. When I do visit a site in person, I'm kitted out in personal protective equipment to safeguard our members.

What is your first memory of a farm?

As I grew up in the countryside of East Anglia, there were lots of farms. So I guess I've always had farming around me. One that sticks to mind most is my cousin's pig farm. My great grandfather used to take my siblings and me for walks around it.

Do you have any farm animals?

Yes! I have a pedigree flock of Southdown Sheep. Their wool gets turned into rugs, felting gifts, and natural compost for the garden. Each year the new lambs are named, and they always share the same letter of the alphabet. This year, we had the class of 2020, whose names all started with the letter G - Glynis, Gladys, Gwen, Gabbi, Glen, Grant, Gordon and Gilbert.

Helpful wellbeing links

If you need help or have queries regarding desktop assessments or anything else related to RSPCA Assured, please do [contact us](#). We have also shared some helpful links on wellbeing during the Covid-19 crisis below:

[That Discomfort You're Feeling is Grief](#)

[Caring for employee mental health: a coronavirus guide](#)

[The Adaptive Challenge of COVID-19](#)

Best wishes,

RSPCA Assured

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