



CASE STUDY - BEEF CATTLE



The best of welfare inside... twinned with best of welfare outside. That's the life of luxury enjoyed by the 250 finishing beef cattle on the farm of William and Caroline Alexander, of Castle Farm, Shoreham, Sevenoaks, in Kent.

In the winter the cattle are snug in their Roundhouse, while during the grazing season groups of them have access to a paddock, where they are free to come and go as they please. During the day they usually choose to be outside grazing pastures, while in the evening and at night they come inside and help themselves to forage and concentrate supplementary feed. Generally animals from four of the building's yards have access to grazing at any one time.

"The Roundhouse delivers unbeatable welfare standards," says William. "The building is light, airy and the open design allows animals to see each other easily in the neighbouring pens. Such social contact means that the cattle are calm and contented, leading to greater feed intake. Furthermore the integral handling system inside the building means that even when being moved, treated or weighed the cattle do not become stressed.

The cattle are housed in the building for the final four to six months of the finishing period - a critical period in which to manage diets for growth rates and finishing profitability. David, the stock manager, confirms that the food intake by the growing cattle in the Roundhouse is significantly more than in their previous accommodation, contributing to the cattle finishing between one month and six weeks younger.

And there are other advantages linked to the new building too. The Alexanders supply specialist high quality catering outlets with

four to six animals a week, with a need for the quality of the meat supplied to be exemplary. Clearly the less stress the animals have during the growing and finishing stage the better. Recently the farm played host to a group of chefs, waiters and waitresses from the London based "Canteen" restaurant chain who were interested to see and learn first-hand about the provenance of their meat supplies. "I was delighted that we were able to demonstrate the high welfare afforded to our animals and to improve our customers understanding of our part in providing wholesome, traceable food." commented Mr Alexander. Obviously the Roundhouse lends itself to such conversations.

William added "I believe that The Roundhouse is 'a very elegant structure', fitting comfortably into the landscape. We had no problems gaining planning permission and with a public footpath running close to the building, it attracts much comment and interest. So by way of public relations, I have erected a sign informing walkers about the building, the cattle and my production system".

He concluded, "If I needed to house more cattle I'd definitely put up another Roundhouse because I'm totally positive about all of its qualities."

For more information on the HopShop, please go to www.hopshop.co.uk



Geoff Simpson (left) & William Alexander (right) toast the completion of William's RH30

