



Heather Jenkins

Heather Jenkins studied Agricultural Marketing at Harper Adams Agricultural College in Shropshire.

Heather, a farmer's daughter, joined Waitrose in 1980, working in and then managing a number of branch meat departments before joining the Bracknell based central Meat Buying department.

In 1994 she was appointed Central Buyer – Meat with poultry and fish being added to her responsibilities in 2000.

Last year Waitrose was voted the most "Compassionate Supermarket" by Compassion in World Farming, recognising in particular the contribution Heather and her team have made to improvements to animal welfare and particularly poultry procured through the Waitrose producer group network.

Waitrose were also awarded the well recognised Meat and Poultry News "Meat Retailer" of the year in the multiple retailer category recognising the consistent quality of the Waitrose meat offer and the sustainability of their supply chain arrangements.



Richard Sadler

Richard grew up very much the butcher's son, joining the family business in 1963. The business was sold in 1967. Richard joined Sainsbury's as a butcher in their Cowley, Oxford store and afterwards joined their buying team based on Smithfield Market.

He joined Waitrose in 1969 and took over responsibility for the buying of all meat products in 1987. In 1994 he was appointed Head of Buying for Meat, Poultry, Fish and Eggs, in 1997 Dairy Foods joined his buying group giving him responsibility for over 20% of Waitrose sales.

He was an MLC Commissioner from 1995 to 2002 and in 1997 chaired the IGDs Beef Group as part of the food project. He is currently a Committee member for the LINK Sustainable Livestock Production Programme.

Richard Sadler and Heather Jenkins FROM WAITROSE FOOD SHOPS OF THE JOHN LEWIS PARTNERSHIP

Apart from reading a little bit about us in pre conference literature, the chances are, that very few of you have heard of the John Lewis Partnership and even fewer of you Waitrose.

So to start with we need to describe our position in the UK food business.

John Lewis comprises 26 department stores including Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Bristol, Manchester and a number in and around London the most notable in Oxford street and where the whole business started the rather posh peoples' shop in Sloane Square Peter Jones. Waitrose "The Food shops of the John Lewis Partnership" trade predominately in the South of England with a 145 supermarkets and sales last year of £2.5 billion.

This represents a relatively small 3.5% share of the UK food market which pales into insignificance when compared with the mighty Tesco with over 20% and ASDA and Sainsbury, names most of you have heard of, trading in the mid teens.

Nevertheless we serve 2 million customers a week and in our key trading areas which namely are the South of England and the Home Counties we enjoy pockets of business around 10%.

There is no question we have a reputation for outstanding quality particularly in fresh food and the relatively small scale of our business has meant that we have been able to develop over 30 years or so a comprehensive network of producer groups.

Heather and I are very privileged to manage areas of our business more affectionately known as Hero categories i.e. meat, poultry fish and dairy foods So if you can kill it, skin it, scale it, pluck it or squeeze it its our responsibility. We also have a fine reputation for fruit and vegetables, coffee, teas and preserves, wines and many others besides. So there we are 145 stores predominately in the South of England selling £2.5 billion worth of food each year to 2 million customers per week. Certainly not the cheapest but trying hard to be the best.

Before we talk about Hereford beef and how it fits into our business, it is important to describe and recall the immense media exposure that the UK's food and farming industries have been exposed to.

It seems to us this has been disproportionate but never the less it is very real. A business such as ours with a brand worth 2.5 billion needs to minimise exposure to reputational risk that could be incurred if we do not react or respond or take positive action to distance our business from some of the less savoury aspects of intensive farming.

Our collective expertise in the Waitrose fresh food business is nearly 60 years and apart from the COMA report that was produced in 1984 that suggested red meat eaters had a much greater risk of heart disease than low meat eaters, it was Chernobyl and the radioactive fall out caused by that disaster that first seemed to draw media's attend to the mysteries of agriculture and intensive livestock production in particular.

Since then we have seen a catalogue of shock horror head lines many driven by our popular tabloid press that has constantly undermined consumer confidence in the food and in particular meat they eat.

Obviously our experiences with BSE and FMD would be familiar subjects to you all but how about.....

Dehydrated worm protein in cattle feed, Sawdust as a feed bulker, Salmonella in eggs and poultry, Lindane contamination of milk.

Classical Swine Fever - round 1, round 2 and recently round 3. Foot and Mouth disease in 1967, 1974 and of course on a massive scale in 2001. Antibiotic growth promoters - today's issue - no. A TV programme in 1983 brought them to the surface much to the annoyance of our agridrug industry.

Castration, teeth clipping and tail docking have constantly featured and pregnant mare serum in the sponging of ewes also got close to headlines, Infectious Salmon Anaemia in Salmon of course., Colour Red 2g in sausage and other products., Canthaxanthin, colourant in eggs and fish.

Monosodium glutamate, phosphates in bacon, sausage and chicken and of course added water in frozen poultry. We cannot of course forget BSE, The controversy of battery egg production and of course intensive broiler production, More recently we have GMs in animal feeds, Newcastle disease., Swine Vesicular Disease, Blue Ears disease.

PMWS,PDNS both post weaning diseases in pigs, Scrapie in sheep in the BSE connection. Meningitis in pigs, Gumbria in Poultry Organophosphorus sheep dips. Paralytic shell fish poisoning. Histamine loading in game fish.

Ecoli 0157, M Para TB in milk, Bovine TB, Lysteria, Campylobacter and Vibrio Paralaemolyticus in warm water shell fish.

So perhaps that list clearly demonstrates both the need and opportunity we had to deliver to our customers traditional products with real heritage and quality connotations.

In order to achieve continuity of supplies we have steadily developed some 25 producer groups which of course include Hereford beef, Welsh lamb, pork, salmon, turkey, chicken, ducks, eggs, and milk. Often subdivided to supply free range and organic alternatives.

At this point we have to mention Aberdeen Angus beef because this was our first experience of bringing breed specific product into our branches

We started this group off 14 years ago we now have 350 members producing 500 cattle per week. Up until about 5 years ago our pre-packaged offer in beef was covered by the more anonymous British Beef Label. Most beef came from young cereal fed bulls.

This product served us and our customers well over many years however once customer confidence had been restored following the BSE controversy they became more discerning about quality and flavour and demand for more flavoursome succulent meat was clearly being demonstrated through the success of our Angus project. Hence the Hereford concept was born and as you will all appreciate treated in a similar way to our Angus programme in terms of low stress at slaughter, on the bone maturation and extended maturation in vacuum pack form has transformed our pre packed assortment performance

Surprisingly after all this time we are still the only British retailer to specifically market Hereford beef and long may that continue because as many of you will be aware of course that unlike intensive and feed lot system of production operated in many parts of the world most of the Hereford beef produced in the UK is as a result of a by product of the dairy herd. In this sector it is obviously used for its ease of calving and a good number of the heifers have and continue to be reared for suckler cow replacements. But apart from us there is no real market with many dairy farmers still preferring to use continental bulls that have traditionally made a better calf return.

However the thinking dairy farmer who obviously supplies Waitrose with our Select Farm Milk are happily signing up either for Hereford semen that we sponsor through our group or buying their own bulls. On the basis that we supply a secure market at a predictable price many are finding it well worth while weaning their calves themselves before selling them onto to rearers in our beef supply chain. Their popularity as sires in suckler herds is certainly increasing a pace.

The Hereford Society themselves must guard against poor selection, they must do everything possible to make sure only the best bulls are used if the confidence and credibility in the breed that has started to re-emerge is to continue to build. So with agreement from the UK Hereford Society and approval from our Trading Standards authority we describe it as "Beef bred from Pedigree Bulls" There are very few John Camerons in the UK or the world indeed for that matter.

We are very fortunate to have formed an excellent relationship with a business called Dovecote Park who operate a dedicated abattoir and processing operation exclusively for Waitrose as well as managing the growing complexity of our producer group structures

We now have 46 branches of our 145 selling 300 Hereford cattle per week. A full range of cuts are available and it is all centrally packed in controlled atmosphere packs.

So with support from the breed society. Hard work and care and attention to detail from our abattoir processor and their livestock team. Clear customer choice giving reliable, tender, succulent and flavoursome beef product we have improved values of pedigree breeders, improved values of Hereford calves from both suckler herds and dairy producers. Raised the profile of the Hereford beef breed and improved our sales of beef on average by 20% in every branch in which it is stocked and delivers our customers safe, succulent, enjoyable beef that they deserve. All in all a win win situation we believe.

So this is a potted version of Hereford beef in Waitrose. Built on the background of steadily declining meat and beef sales through the mid 80's an industry being rocked by food scares and controversy culminating in the dreadful implication announced to the British Parliament on the 26th March in 1996 that evidence existed that the cattle diseases known as BSE was probably connected to New Variant CJD recognised in humans. Unless as farmers, butchers or processors you experienced it and I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy it was a desperate time for our beef industry which was dissolving before our very eyes

But steadily we realised that quality counts and although seriously effected, our business was proving more durable than most others. We kept our nerve, kept beef on the shelf and pulled on the fine traditional qualities of Aberdeen Angus and Hereford beef. The rest they say is history despite having only 3.5% share of the food market our business now enjoys nearly 5% share of the beef market and last year our sales and volume grew in the order of 15%. Double that of any of our competitors. Our reputation for quality has gone from strength to strength and we enjoy leading the field in bringing Hereford beef to our consumers and we take this opportunity to thank the British Hereford breed society for the support and enthusiasm they have given us.

It's been an absolute pleasure to contribute in a small way to this World Conference.

