



OATHALL SCHOOL FARM

HISTORY

The farm was first established at Oathall in 1941, as part of 'Dig for Victory'. Students undertook the cultivation of potatoes and vegetables in two areas of land, previously playing fields. Curricular links were forged with most subject areas. After a period of decline, the farm is now once again seen as a major teaching resource for most areas of the curriculum.

CURRICULUM

Besides being used as a curricular resource, the farm supports NVQ Level 1 vocational courses in Agriculture and Land Based Operations. These are offered to students, including those from several other local secondary schools. Students attend on a one day per week or five hours per fortnight basis.

VISITORS

Oathall has its own farm trail and receives regular visits from playgroups, nurseries, primary and secondary classes, by prior arrangement. Uniformed and voluntary groups come along for visits out of school hours. An hour and a half visit, including a milking demonstration is most popular. A classroom base is made available in the Rural Dimension Visitors Centre.



THE FARM IN OPERATION – WHO DOES THE WORK?

Although the farm has a technician, the students are heavily involved in the feeding, cleaning out and milking of livestock each day before and after school, at weekends and during holidays. Most stock tasks are carried out by NVQ students during practical sessions. The extra-curricular students, aged 11-16, are all volunteers and work under the supervision of a senior student or supported by the farm technician. Other students volunteer to help in the greenhouse, polytunnel or gardens.



LAND

We have only 2ha of ground for use by the farm on the college site, but in addition rent 12ha of land for conservation as silage or hay or for grazing our sheep.

STOCK

Pigs

Typically 6-8 sows of the Large White or British Saddleback breeds, plus their progeny. Some piglets are sold as weaners but most go for light pork weighing 60+ kilograms aged 16 weeks.

We sell approximately 250 pork packs each year and sell around 500kg or 3/4 sows worth of sausages each year.

Cattle

We keep Ayrshire cattle, a breed originally from South West Scotland. Currently we have 4 milking cows, 3 in calf heifers, 2 yearling heifers, 2 calves. Some of these animals are kept on other premises, as we only need to keep one cow in milk for educational purposes.



Sheep

We lamb up to 45 ewes each year including pedigree Suffolk, Suffolk crosses, North Country Mules and Welsh Mules. We use both a Suffolk and a Texel tup. The sheep only return to this site for lambing and for shearing.

We try to prepare and sell 3–4 shearling Suffolk rams at the breeding sales each year.

Lambing takes place between late January and March most years. Most lambs are sold when finished as a meat carcass, butchered and ready for the freezer.



Poultry

Small numbers of bantams are kept for egg laying and for artists to paint, draw and photograph.



SHOWS

We encourage students to prepare cattle, sheep and pigs for agricultural shows all over the country, including the Royal at Stoneleigh, Warwickshire.



This year we are busily planning a show garden, which will be set up for judging at the South of England Showground in June.

FOOD PRODUCTION

At Oathall, we produce fresh local meat direct from our own livestock:

PORK from Large White and Saddleback pigs and

PORK SAUSAGES in variety

LAMB – grass fed on pastures, which have not been sprayed with chemicals or artificial fertilizers

LAMB AND MINT SAUSAGES

LAMBURGERS

Organic BEEF - hung for three weeks

All our animals have access to natural light, plenty of bedding and the freedom to exhibit normal behaviour.

Our meat is fresh, not frozen, and packaged in small quantities ready for the freezer.

Click [here](#) to see our price list.

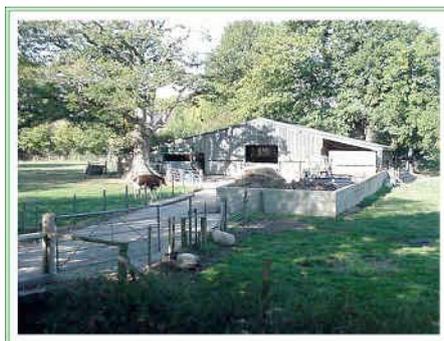
FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

We will be taking more Year 10/11 students from other local schools on a one-day per week basis. We are also developing a vocational approach to Science in Years 8 and 9.

Currently a sensory garden is under construction and we aim to conserve more water from the guttering of our polytunnel, to be stored in tanks for later use.

Exciting links are being forged with Wakehurst Place at Ardingly which is an offshoot of Kew Gardens. The Millennium Seed Bank is situated here and we will be using their home produced compost, mixed with some of our own, for sowing and potting on. This means that we can finally say goodbye to bought-in peat based composts.

We will be developing our own composting areas but still continue to sell well rotted manure to local gardeners and allotment holders.



For more information, why not log onto the farm website at www.oathall.w-sussex.sch.uk or contact Howard Wood on 01444 883211 or email hwood@wfgsl.org.uk