

ROBERT PHILLIP has lived on Green Farm in North Yorkshire since he was six months old, and began helping his father with the milking as soon as he could walk. His father and grandfather were farmers, and he says he never considered any alternative careers. 'I wasn't particularly interested in doing anything but milking cows.'

By 2002, Phillip and his wife Wendy had a herd of 130 Holsteins and Jerseys, which they would milk three times a day with the help of a fellow farmer. But that year Phillip bought Wendy two Highland cows as a birthday present and, fed up with the punishing milking

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Yorkshireman who lives and breathes cows

schedule, decided to switch from a milk farm to producing beef.

The couple sold their milking herd and now have more than 100 breeding cows, which are spread across roughly 1,000 acres of farmland in the Yorkshire Dales. 'It is a beautiful part of the world,' says Phillip. 'On a sunny evening the smell and the views are fantastic. Even when the weather is horrendous it has its own beauty.'

To maintain the cows, he makes sure they are eating enough roughage (mainly grass, but during the winter silage and barley), monitors their weight and health, and checks them regularly during calving.

Wendy Phillip
with their 100-strong
herd of cattle.
**Sophie
Photographs
Duffield**



After they have been slaughtered, the beef is hung on meat hooks for two weeks in a humid but cold room (where the temperature is kept between 1C and 3C), before being taken to a local butcher to hang for another week, a process known as dry-ageing. 'It has to be hung properly to get that flavour,' explains Phillip. 'Highland beef is very

well marbled. It tastes wonderful when slow-roasted for a long time.'

Finally, the meat is cut into steaks and roasting joints. As well as having their own farm shop and supplying a local pub-restaurant, the couple provide Waitrose & Partners with around a quarter of the Highland beef it sells during the festive season. October is the farm's busiest month, as they begin preparing for the hectic Christmas period.

When he's not tending to his fold, Phillip travels around the north of England, buying and selling animals, renting out bulls and attending cattle shows. He shows his own cattle in up to 10 a year and has recently been invited to judge, too. 'My proudest moment was being asked to judge the Highlands at the biggest show in Scotland. It was a great honour,' he says. 'I thought, "If they've asked me to judge, then I must not be too bad."

'It's very different to what we did before,' he adds. 'But it's far more fun.' hellifieldhighlandbeef.co.uk; waitrose.com/entertaining

