



OVER THE FARM GATE

We feature 'whole health' farmers, growers or producers that share our values and enhance and protect our collective health (that's all life everywhere) by the way that they farm.



PAMMY RIGGS

Farmer, Author,
& Trainee WHAg
Complementary
Health Adviser

Let's introduce you to one of our WHAg farmers and trainee advisors, award-winning poultry producer, teacher and author Pammy Riggs, who farms in Devon with husband Ritchie.

Tell us a bit about yourself, what you farm and produce, and where you are based.

Growing up in Scotland no one could keep me away from farms and animals. The family home was in a small fishing town, but I lived to be in the steddin and out on the moors, gathering sheep 'helping out' and riding ponies. The horse interest gave me an excuse to be on farms in Wiltshire, Belgium, the Netherlands and back round via Dorset, finally settling in Devon where at last I could have my own little farm and be the farmer I wanted to be rather than at others' beck and call.

Providence Farm always sold directly, pork, beef, poultry, lamb, eggs and honey have all been part of the journey. The Organic Food Awards during the early 2000s boosted the business no end and led to unexpected TV appearances on River Cottage, Rick Stein's Heros and even Escape to the Country!



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I have always taken an alternative slant on life, especially where looking after animals is concerned so becoming a Livestock Complementary Health Advisor is the next step, particularly with dairy farms in my sights. Next project, www.cowconomics.co.uk, watch this space!

How would you sum up your farming ethos and values?

Take responsibility for the domestic livestock we, collectively, have bred to suit our own systems, aligning those systems to Nature in as creative a way as possible.

How do you put these values into practice?

I came into farming, with my partner, to be organic, it seemed the most natural way forward for beginners in the 1980s. It was a natural move to use 'clean technology' where possible, so herbs, homeopathy and excellent husbandry were our way forward. The homeopathy expressly because it had worked on a sticky eczema problem with a child.

What gives you the most satisfaction in farming?

Tipping the livestock on the farm back into excellent health. 'They do shine,' as an old farmer said to me, 'the rest will follow'. I know we achieved it on our own farm, now I am taking this to other farms as a WHAg Advisor. I have to start with the livestock, I have an affinity, they know when you want to help them.



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What do you do to encourage biodiversity on your farm?

Lots, half of our farm is meadow restored to Culm. When you see 7 buzzards stacked in a thermal above your land and owls hooting like crazy, the rest of their food chain exists. Come and visit us in May/June for the flower show!

Name three triumphs/challenges overcome on your farm using alternative methods or non-conventional approaches.

Juliette de Baracli Levi's herbal dog mange lotion for our long suffering collie cross, later we found a Fox Mange nosode that worked for a while, after that we used garlic pills - all in all even though there was dreadful fox mange in the area, both our dogs stayed clear.

The Coccidiosis nosode, we used with sheep, pigs and eventually poultry. Recently in dairy I have nipped the beginnings of foot problems and mastitis in the bud. It is a lovely feeling when a swelling that looks red, tight and ready to break out just goes away after a squirt or two of an appropriate remedy!

Making good use of my Prevention and Early Intervention skills learned through my Whole Health Agriculture Advisor training.



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The alternative health tool, product or practice you couldn't do without

In my old life - the Cocci nosode. In my new life my Ainsworth Bovine Veterinary Kit, I love it! And the fact it has a Royal seal of approval is icing on the cake!

Where or to whom do you look for farm health inspiration?

An amazing WhatsApp group developed out of my recent training as a Livestock Complementary Health Advisor with Whole Health Ag. There is so much practical knowledge shared and exchanged by the farmers who are having amazing successes. We all benefit.

What would you say to farmers yet to dip their toe into the alternative/whole health farming world?

Go for it! The tools and training are there for you, and you will quickly see improvements, not just in your livestock health but your bank balance too.

Which animal has taught you the most?

Keeping poultry on a commercial scale. We threw everything that 'industry' advised out the window and kept chickens of all ages, all stages at the same time. The thing we did was to endeavour to give them their most natural life from day one.



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So access to outdoors straight away, greenery, grit, real grain to encourage their true gizzard function, and an interesting environment to be 'busy' in. Supported by some homeopathy - it worked! The lesson was Nature is strong and Nature knows best!

Where will we find you when you are not on the farm?

I have a weakness for being noisy! I may be playing a piano accordion or better still clashing sticks with fellow Morris Dancers in the street. It's OK, I will be in disguise, you don't have to acknowledge me!

WHAg is committed to helping farmers find and adopt practices that put real health on our plates. What would we find on your favourite plate?

Whatever comes out of the kitchen garden in season or home-grown meat from the freezer. We came into this to feed ourselves and family - part of the deal.

How can people find you?

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