

# Charity Farm Project is a roaring success

A report by Paula Goad  
Development Officer



The 'Farming For All' charity farm project at Boltons Park Farm, aimed at helping vulnerable adults in the local community, has been a huge success!

Boltons Park Farm has been welcoming weekly visits from Farming For All clients, who have a range of support needs that can act as barriers to social inclusion, such as mental health issues or substance and alcohol misuse. By participating in achievable farm and animal based activities at the Farm and engaging with a range of new people, the project has been able to help these vulnerable individuals to regain self esteem, motivation and build on personal development.

The project, which ran for 16 weeks, was developed by Boltons Park Farm and Farming For All and is based upon the concept of Care Farming, which combines care of the land and animals with care of people in a setting where they feel safe, respected, and engaged in meaningful activity. It uses places such as commercial farms as a base for promoting mental and physical health through normal farming activity and aims to develop people's potential rather than focusing on their limitations.

With 23 clients benefitting overall from the weekly visits, Jude Allen, Director of

Farming For All, said: "The project is not just about providing access to the countryside and contact with animals, it's about making people feel valued, respected and their work appreciated. This then provides them with the confidence and self worth to tackle the more difficult areas in their lives. We have had several participants move on to other courses such as agriculture and outdoor skills and many have been able to use the Farm as a way of maintaining their abstinence from alcohol and substance misuse. We are hugely pleased with the successes that the project has provided in the personal development of the clients."

The project has not only received great feedback from the participants, such as 'The animals make me feel calm', 'My motivation and self esteem has definitely improved' and 'My confidence has grown', but has also had a positive impact on the farm staff. Steve Pauley, of Boltons Park, said: "There is not a doubt in my mind that the project is of enormous help to the clients, as the weeks go by you can see them grow in confidence and self worth. They are avid learners and do great work which can be trusted and you can see that the animals bring out the best in them. I am proud to be involved."

The project has also seen 14 members of staff and students volunteering to help with the sessions, who along with the farm staff have been crucial in engaging and encouraging the group to participate and making them feel part of the team.

This project has been hailed as such a success that the Farm hopes to be able to expand it by delivering even more sessions in 2011 and helping many more vulnerable individuals.

More pictures on back cover ...



Farming for All is a Not-For-Profit organisation dedicated to the vision of using the outdoors as an effective means of improving physical, mental and emotional well being for vulnerable individuals in Hertfordshire. For more information visit [www.farmingforall.org.uk](http://www.farmingforall.org.uk).



## Interview

Paula Burton interviews  
**Andrew Hamilton**  
RVC Farm Manager

**Congratulations on your appointment as Manager of the RVC Farm. What were you doing previously, and how does this place you in good stead for the position?**

I was working as farm/estate manager for Sentry on a 1000 acre estate in Somerset; prior to this I was the estate manager (responsible for the farm and gardens) at a land based college in Staffordshire. I feel I have gained experience that places me in good stead for life at the RVC, including livestock production, managing an educational farm, selling beef and lamb and dealing with the general public.

**We imagine it isn't a desk-based job. What does a typical day look like?**

No day is the same but, like most things in life, farming has become subject to more paperwork and legislation in recent years, so time has to be spent in the office. I usually start at around 7 o'clock, but if I am on morning feeding it is more like 5 am. I start by helping with feeding and checking stock. Once the cows are milked and fed we have a farm meeting over a morning cuppa' and make plans for the rest of the day, whilst updating each other on what has been happening. This is often the most important part of the day and has allowed me to build a good working relationship with Charley and Steve.

After this there is no set plan, but jobs