

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND ADDRESS TO THE 2025 WORLD CONGRESS – NEW ZEALAND

Hello from the Galloway Cattle Society of Great Britain and Ireland, it certainly doesn't seem 18 months ago since we were all together in Switzerland. It is great to see you all again and I would like to thank our hosts for organising this wonderful World Congress.

Beef Prices As we enter 2025, UK beef prices are the talk on most suckler beef farms as prices have reached unprecedented levels, with deadweight prices soaring to £5.50 (\$6.69 / €6.54) per kilo, causing cattle to sell for over £2,500 (\$3,039.29 / €2,968). Strong demand from both Ireland and the Continent has driven prices for beef-bred cull cows above £2,000 (€2,374.80), culminating in a record-breaking £3,538 (\$4,298.31 / €4,201.02) for a seven-year-old British Blue cow. The demand for rearing, grazing, and forward cattle, shows no signs of abating, with spring-born calves averaging over £1,260 (\$1530 / €1493) at just six months old. This is very welcome for our breeders, the majority of who sell their animals for others to fatten.

As you can imagine, these prices are highly welcome. Having said that, the cost of inputs has been steadily rising, with a average annual increase of 7.3% over the last five years. By early 2024 fertilizer prices started to stabilize, though they remain much higher than pre-crisis levels, and the average price of animal feed in the UK has decreased to approximately £357 per tonne. One key factor driving high beef prices is the decline in the national beef herd, with beef cow numbers dropping by 3.8% to 1.4 million animals, marking the largest annual decrease in over a decade. Other contributing factors include diminishing margins, a lack of labour, and the significant investment required to purchase and maintain any class of cattle for a viable beef operation.

Galloways are still in demand, although numbers forward for the sales have been disappointing, larger numbers of cattle are being traded privately. We have seen people who want easier kept cattle which can winter outside establishing new herds.

Our Agricultural shows have been well supported in 2024, with increased entries, if you would like to visit these shows, a full list is posted on our NEW web site, or contact the office for more information. All the show and sale reports are posted on our socials and on our web site. www.gallowaycattlesociety.co.uk. Please keep up-to-date with all our news.

There are many other problems facing UK farming, some are natural, like the weather:-

In 2024, the United Kingdom experienced a year marked by significant weather events, including notable rainfall, temperature extremes, and flooding.

Overall Temperature: Despite frequent grey skies, the average overall temperature in 2024 was the UK's fourth warmest on record, helped by high minimum daily temperatures rather than blazing sunshine.

2024 was the 17th wettest year in the UK since records began in 1836. Southern England faced severe storms and flooding, while Scotland and Northern Ireland saw slightly drier conditions than normal. Spring was the warmest on record, despite being the sixth wettest recorded. High minimum temperatures played a significant role in this anomaly.

The summer of 2024 was the UK's coolest since 2015, with mean temperatures in June and July slightly below average. However, parts of England and Wales experienced drier and sunnier conditions than usual. The autumn season was marked by unsettled weather, with a series of low-pressure systems bringing rain and wind across the country.

The arrival of Bluetongue, in the southeast of England, is a disease spread by midges causing fever, swelling, ulcers and respiratory issues. This has gradually spread up the eastern side of the country, and has created significant challenges for livestock producers in the affected areas. The establishment of exclusion zones has restricted trade outside these areas, limiting opportunities for many farmers. Additionally, the outbreak has effectively closed the door to trading with Europe and Ireland, representing a substantial loss for export sales.

Another problem is political, as you may have heard in the news, there was a change of government in 2024. The Labour Party, led by Sir Keir Starmer, achieved a landslide victory in the general election, securing 411 seats. The Conservative Party, under Rishi Sunak, won 121 seats, marking a substantial shift in the UK's political landscape. The biggest change has been in tax policy regarding inheritance tax. Farmland is no longer exempt, and will now incur a 20% tax on inheritances worth over £1 million. With land prices averaging around ten thousand pounds per acre (£24,000 ha), this could mean the end of the family farm for many, as land sales may be required to cover tax demands. Protests, including tractor rallies, have taken place across all four countries of the UK.

Our thoughts are now turning to 2027, as we plan for our 150th anniversary, and the Galloway World Congress. We can't wait to welcome you, and to celebrate this significant milestone in our history. Should you wish to visit before then, please feel free to contact the Society, and we will be happy to assist in arranging your stay. Wishing everyone a very enjoyable and happy congress in New Zealand.