

SUPPORTING ROLES

Name:	Andy Cooper
Place of residence:	Cheshire
Profession:	Livestock haulier
Highs:	Meeting people
Lows:	Rules, regulations and 'red tape'

Andy Cooper: "I like driving, but I also like the social side of my job"

In for the long haul

text Rachael Porter

As a boy he spent his school holidays travelling the length and breadth of the UK in his father Reginald's cab. So little wonder that Andy Cooper caught the truck driving bug and joined the family business.

He's been a livestock haulier for 21 years now and says that it's a great job – there's nothing else he'd rather do.

"I do like driving, which is essential since that's what I spend the majority of my time doing. But I also like the social side of my job – meeting people on farm and at farm sales.

"I've made a lot of friends and I have many loyal customers."

He typically clocks up around 1,500 miles a week. Much of his work is centred in and around Beeston Market, which is close to his Cheshire base, but cattle sale work regularly takes him to Devon and Cornwall and up to Yorkshire, Cumbria and Lancashire.

"Cattle sales are particularly sociable and enjoyable but I also like watching the cattle in the show ring.

"After two decades in the business I think I've developed an eye – and an appreciation – for a decent cow or heifer.

"But I'll stick to my driving. I've never wanted to start farming myself."

Another plus for Andy is that every day is different. He meets new and familiar faces and drives down both new roads and well travelled ones.

"I never get bored or lonely and if I fancy a bit of company in my cab then there's always the radio."

Andy prides himself on providing a good service. "I take my work seriously – the livestock I transport are valuable animals and need to be moved quickly, efficiently and carefully.

"And it's important to me to get positive feedback. I've never had to advertise and have many regular and repeat customers. Any new customers find me through word-of-mouth."

There's only one downside to the job for Andy and it's something that he says gives him an affinity with dairy producers.

There's too much 'red tape'. "Rules and regulations – usually pointless ones that are dreamt up by someone behind a desk who has no idea of how livestock hauliers operate – are what get me down.

"But I'm not the only one struggling with red tape. I can talk to my customers about it, which helps both me and them. Most of them have far more to untangle than I do."

