

VALUE ADDED

Name:	<b>Emma Robinson</b>
Location:	<b>Abergavenny, Monmouthshire</b>
Herd size:	<b>80 cows</b>
Adding value:	<b>Farm-gate direct milk sales</b>



Emma Robinson: “Farm-gate sales are a much-needed income boost”

# Milk sales, from the door

text Rachael Porter

Selling milk from a fridge in the farmhouse porch is doing more than simply adding value to the milk produced by the Emma Robinson’s family’s pedigree herd. It’s also building a relationship with the local community and increasing awareness among consumers about how milk is produced and the day-to-day struggles faced by modern dairy producers.

The catalyst was what Emma describes as an appallingly low milk price in 2015: “Just 11ppl for our B band milk and just 14ppl for A band. That wasn’t sustainable and we thought that if we could just add value to even a relatively small percentage of our milk it would be a start. Comparing 11ppl to £1 per litre, it was a no brainer.”

So, in June 2015, Emma invested in a fridge and some bottling equipment and set up her ‘honesty box’ system. She began selling raw milk in two-litre cartons, at £1 per litre. A vending

machine may also figure in future farm-gate sales plans. “But the figures would have to stack up.”

The Abergavenny-based herd was hit by bTB in 2017. But undeterred – and encouraged by loyal customers and a positive response to market research – Emma invested in a pasteuriser. Pasteurised milk sales have continued at a similar level to those seen for raw milk. “As soon as we get the all clear we’ll start selling raw milk again. But sales of pasteurised are good enough to have justified the investment in the pasteurising equipment. We’ll sell both raw and pasteurised in the future.”

Emma is also keen to stress that the benefits of selling milk directly from the farm are more than the higher price per litre. “Contact with consumers is important for all dairy businesses. The gap between farming and the public is too wide – there’s little understanding of what really goes on dairy farms. Narrowing that gap is important. It gives them a more balanced and realistic view

of how food is produced and what an important job we do.”

Emma says that her ‘shop’ is open 24 hours a day and customers like the fact that they can buy milk at 11pm, if they run out. “Our set up lends itself to farm-gate sales. We’re close to the road, there’s ample parking and turning space in the yard, and the house porch is well lit with a well stocked fridge. And it’s important that you’re friendly and welcoming to customers.”

Emma also sells milk through local farmers markets. This also increases awareness and many customers, once they try the milk, will then make the trip to the farm to buy it direct.

She’s also applied for a food and business grant and wants to build and fit out a processing room. “This will allow me to expand this side of the business. If we can pasteurise more milk then can start to supply local shops, cafes and restaurants.”