

All in a Day's Work

David Sheehy – Dairy Farmer

David Sheehy was born and reared in Baltimore, Co Cork. Having trained at Darrara Agricultural College in Clonakilty, Co Cork, he returned home to run his family's 115 acre dairy farm, where he milks 55 cows.



Photos courtesy of David Sheehy

David Sheehy

Have you always been interested in what you do?

I have been interested in farming from a young age. I grew up on the farm and my father farmed it before me.

What training did you do to get where you are today?

After doing my Leaving Cert I went to agricultural college for 12 months. After that I was given three months work experience on another dairy farm in Bandon.

What is a day in your life like?

Most mornings my day starts at 7.30am when I must milk the cows, which must also be milked in the evening. This time of the year, early summer, there are lots of jobs to do around the farm, such as spreading fertiliser and cutting silage. However, the very busy times on the farm are in February/March and in October/November when the cows have their calves.

What is your main aim?

To keep the farm in good order so that if my son wants to, he can take it over in the years to come.

What is the best thing about your job?

What I like best is the variety. No two days are exactly the same as different happens all the time, from day to day and from season to season. I also like being my own boss.

What is the worst thing about your job?

The worst thing is having to work outside in bad weather.

Do you enjoy your work?

I do. You have to enjoy this type of work to be able to do it.

What equipment do you use?

We have a modern milking parlour that is run with the help of computers. When the cows come in the clusters are put on the teats. When they have been milked the computer takes the clusters off automatically and records how much milk each cow has given. The cows are also fed by computer and the amount of food can be adjusted for each cow. Not only can we see how much milk each cow produces



Putting the clusters on.

over a long period of time but it means that no matter who milks them everything is done the same way and the cows are happy. As well as the parlour there are lots of other pieces of farm equipment including a 110 horsepower tractor, a mower for silage, a fertiliser spreader and a slurry tanker.

Where does your work take you?

I am involved with farm discussion groups and visit other farms. I often go to the mart to buy and sell cows and also give talks to schools about animal breeding and other farm activities.

Do you work alone or as part of a team?

It is a family-run farm so I work as part of a team. Everyone chips in - my father, my wife and my children all help when needed.

What would you do if you weren't doing what you do?

I am involved a lot with first aid and first responder training. If I wasn't farming I think I would like to work in that area, perhaps as a paramedic.

What advice would you give someone wanting to do your job?

Try and get to know a farmer and work with him/her during the holidays to see if you would like that type of work. As an adult a farm might not support you fulltime but there are other options. When I came home to my father's farm, it wasn't big enough for the two of us so I had to find other work off the farm as well. How we farm is constantly changing. This opens up lots of options for people to do something totally different but still agriculture-related, such as working in sales for an agriculture company, working in a co-op or as a teacher or instructor. Keep your options open.



David with his tractor.



Bringing the cows in for milking.

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