

M&S Select Farms

RSPCA assured milk

M&S
— FOOD —

In 2017 M&S became the first major retailer to sell 100% RSPCA assured milk to customers and is recognised as for its long-term commitment to industry-leading welfare standards.

Founded in 1999, the M&S milk pool was an industry-first when originally launched. Created to pay farmers a fair milk price above the cost of production, the aim was to give M&S dairy farmers the stability they needed to invest for the future and create a resilient business. Without the threat of volatility, farmers in the milk pool worked collaboratively alongside suppliers, industry experts, and NCOs to develop a leading set of welfare standards as part of the M&S Select Farm Assurance standards.

Nick Bell, a veterinary surgeon and farm consultant, has been involved with the M&S milk pool since 2006 and has helped to establish an approach that centres on striving for the best.

“Over a number of years M&S has worked hard to take welfare standards on their dairy farms to the next level,” explains Nick. “Right from the milk pool’s inception, M&S adopted a visionary approach which has resulted in a set of

welfare standards which not only allow cows to flourish but also create resilient farm systems.”

From the outset, M&S dairy producers have been involved in discussions and the formation of these standards, and Nick believes this was key to success: “Collaboration is absolutely vital. The farmers are the ones who will be implementing the standards so without their buy-in, the programme would not be such a success. Ultimately the real strength of M&S milk pool is that it is largely farmer-led and farmer championed.”

The commitment of M&S dairy producers to animal welfare was recognised externally when M&S became the first major retailer to sell 100% RSPCA assured milk. As part of this process, all farms in the milk pool were audited against a comprehensive set of RSPCA guidelines. “The RSPCA assurance scheme champions exceptional welfare standards and all M&S producers have done extremely well to reach these stringent standards. Receiving this accreditation is a real testament to the hard work of our farmers over a number of years.”

