



# Helping nature to recover by...

## reducing inputs with farmer, Chris Evans

### The Farm

703 acres upland livestock farm at the South Western end of the Long Mynd and part of the Plowden Estate. It's a farm of two parts with lowland pasture in the foothills of the Long Mynd and the other half classed as less favourable farmland (Severely Disadvantaged, SDA) on the top of the Long Mynd.

Farmer, Chris Evans, took on the contract farming agreement in 2021 to move the business to a more regenerative way of farming. This has meant developing the different parts of the farm to function as an ecological and productive farming system.

These changes have included a significant reduction in the use of wormers and zero use of artificial agricultural fertiliser, benefiting both the farm business and the wider environment.



### “a vertical learning curve”

A quote from Chris about his journey as he manages his business to make a living using regenerative farming practices to improve soil health, biodiversity and to create resilience.

Reducing inputs (fertilisers and wormers) alongside rotational grazing has had a positive impact on improving the health of the soil.

Chris has also embarked on a series of other nature friendly initiatives on the farm. He has planted 150 native hardwood trees, restored historic hedgerows and created small areas where scrub is being allowed to regenerate as habitat.

Read more about these activities [here](#).

### Faecal egg counting

Chris monitors the worm burden in his sheep and cattle via faecal egg counting, this is carried out on farm using a kit purchased with the help of a [FIPL grant](#). By doing this he can target when and which animals need worming. This has greatly reduced the use and cost of wormers on the farm. It also reduces stress on his stock as they are not handled so often.

In terms of helping nature to recover, it's a big win too. Minimising the use of insecticide means much less wormer is present in animal dung and soil. Insecticides not only kill the parasitic worms, but many other insects, including dung beetles, that play a crucial role in decomposition and nutrient recycling - vital for maintaining good soil condition.



## Nature Recovery Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin

In January 2024, the farm entered a Higher-Tier Countryside Stewardship Scheme aimed to secure enhanced environmental benefits and deliver for nature recovery.

### Rotational grazing

Moving to a rotational grazing set up means that Chris no longer uses synthetic fertilisers to improve the pasture. He has planted herbal leys as part of his rotational system. These are longer, mixed grasses, including medicinal plants, which are beneficial for grazing animals. The leys are used for forage conservation and produce excellent high protein silage. They also have deep root systems which is good for soil aeration and improving water absorption and reduced surface runoff.

The cattle graze intensively (200 cattle on under five acres) on a 24-hour rotation. Chris moves them each day to allow time for the grasses and herbal leys to replenish. Moving the cattle is relatively easy as they are keen to get to fresh pasture, and it's also an opportunity to check their health.

By restoring good soil condition, reducing compaction, rotating grazing and allowing time for grasses and herbal leys to replenish, the regenerative system is working well for Chris.



### Upper Onny Farmers Group

Chris is a member of the Upper Onny Farmers Group (UOFG). The group formed as part of the [Stepping Stones Project](#), focusing on ensuring viable upland livestock farms and producing good food in a way that works alongside nature and benefits the environment, landscape and people.

The sharing of knowledge, guest speakers and visits to other farms has helped to support Chris make the changes on the farm. It's also a valuable social group and way of getting to know people in the community.

**“Being a member of the group exposes you to different influences.”**

The UOFG recently set up as a CIC (Community Interest Company) and membership continues to grow.

Members of the UOFG, including Chris, have been asked to talk at other farmer events to share their experiences of being part of the group. Chris also hosts visits to his farm including from school groups and other farmers.

