

PRESS RELEASE FROM ASKHAM BRYAN COLLEGE

FANTASY FARMING BEEF LEAGUE RESULTS ANNOUNCED

Results of the first ever Fantasy Farming Beef League run by Askham Bryan College near York have been announced, and the competition has been so successful that plans are underway to organise a similar project next year looking at fattening different dairy breed crosses.

Rob Rogers of East Heslerton near Malton (team captain), Dave Benson of Kelfield, York and Jamie Leather of Green Hammerton, York collected the trophy as League winners after calculations by the college's Rural Business Research Unit showed their team – the Matadors – had achieved the most profit. Their prize is a trip of a lifetime next July to the world famous Calgary Stampede in Canada.

Liz Philip, College Principal said: "This project has achieved been hugely successful, so much so that we're now looking at a dairy version. The farmers involved have been really committed to it all the way through and have learnt a lot from it. And it's been great to see links established between dairy and beef farmers. Many congratulations to the winning team.'

The Fantasy Farming project has been running at Askham Bryan College for the last twelve months and involved 30 farmers from across the region. The ten teams of three farmers (both dairy and beef) were each given a pen of 8 black and white bull calves with the aim of finding out which team could make the most profit. All the calves were held at the National Beef Training Centre at the College and were fed on specific rations put together by the competitors. The project ran with the aid of funding from Lantra, Anglo Beef Processors and ASDA.

LandSkills Yorkshire and Humber Programme Manager, Julie Hamilton said: "It is great to see so many farmers have taken advantage of this initiative and benefited from their experience. LandSkills is pleased to support such a valuable activity in the region, especially as practical activities such as this are proven to result in faster changes to current business operations as they can be assessed in a safe learning environment before the farmer goes back and implements them at their own farm."

Winners Rob Rogers, Dave Benson and Jamie Leather narrowly pipped the “In it to Win It” team into second place by £16. Mervyn Lewis Head of the College’s Rural Business Research Unit said: “The success of *The Matadors* was down to having a cheap finishing diet. However, for the first 6 months of the trial they had a reasonably expensive diet allowing them to gain good growth rates. At about the 9 month stage the diet was changed to become the cheapest cereal based ration. At the same time growth rates did begin to fall, however the lower price of the diet counteracted this.”

Three of the top four teams all decided to finish their animals at an earlier age, with *Its no Bull* achieving 282kg deadweight at 12 and half months. *Woodys Winners* achieved the highest average deadweight of 332kg; with a profit margin of £202. The highest profit achieved by one animal was £195 from *Friesian Fluke* who also achieved the highest average growth rate of 1.67kg (DLWG).

On the whole, each animal made an average profit of £38. All killing out percentages were consistent between the different rations, ranging between 51-52%. Over one third of the cattle sold achieved O+ grade with 4% grading at P+, while 80% of all the cattle achieved fat grades of 3 or 4L.