

# The Wholesome Hog

Free Range Pedigree Pork at its most delicious

## News

Tuesday 27 January 2009

### Devon farmer lobbies MP for improved pork labelling

A Devon pig farmer is lobbying his MP for clearer labelling on pork packaging, ahead of a television programme broadcast this week, aimed at raising awareness of how pigs are reared.

Keith Partridge and his wife, Roz, who run Duckaller Farm, an organic free-range pig farm at Dawlish, decided to raise the issue with Teignbridge MP, Richard Younger-Ross, when they heard that celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver, was presenting a programme about the way pigs are farmed.

Keith explained: "You have to work hard to understand the current labelling system, which is puzzling to say the least. We're particularly keen to get clarity for consumers over the terms 'outdoor bred' and 'outdoor reared' which can mean very different things.

"The term 'British' can be misleading too as it often applies to meat that has been farmed abroad and then imported to the UK for production or processing. Consumers should not take this term as an assurance that the animal was farmed in this country.

"In fact the pig farming industry is struggling to compete with cheap imports from countries where animal welfare is often a low priority. We believe our government needs to take the lead in demystifying consumers and support British farmers. The best way to clear up the confusion is to get a legal definition passed on what constitutes free-range."

The Partridges believe that with the present confusing labelling system, the only way you can be sure you are buying really good quality meat from pigs looked after in the most natural way, is to buy organic. Or, if buying free-range meat, buy it from a local source.

Keith said: "In a farming community like ours there are so many opportunities for people who want to know where their meat comes from. My advice would be to buy your meat from a local supplier, either a farmers' market, a local independent butcher or direct from a free-range or organic farm.

Buying meat direct from a farm usually means it is less expensive than from anywhere else, as there is no supply chain."

Just four per cent of pigs in the UK are farmed in a free-range way and even fewer (one and a half per cent) are farmed organically.

(Sources: [jamieoliver.com](http://jamieoliver.com) and [soilassociation.org](http://soilassociation.org))

He added: "The vast majority of pigs and chickens are intensively farmed (more so than any other farm animal) so if you are concerned about animal welfare it's particularly important to be selective when buying chicken or pork."

If the only option is to buy meat from a supermarket, people can be reassured that any products marked with the Soil Association's seal of approval is organic and is produced in line with the highest welfare standards.

The association does not allow farms registered with them to carry out practices they deem cruel, such as cutting off pigs' tails off or grinding down their teeth. They insist animals live in the most natural way possible and are stunned before slaughter.

The Partridges have farmed pigs and vegetables at Dawlish organically for nine years. Organically farmed animals have lots of space to root and run around and they live in family groups, which is natural to them. They usually sleep together in insulated huts, with plenty of fresh straw.

Keith continued: "Once we have harvested our vegetables, the pigs are moved to those fields and eat all the leftover bits that we can't use. The organic process supports an environmentally-friendly, sustainable system, which is to everyone's advantage."

"As a result of its more natural and active life organic pork has a much better flavour than the meat of intensively farmed animals."

Roz Partridge said: "We would urge everyone to tune in on Thursday evening to watch the Jamie Oliver programme. The life of an intensively farmed pig is dull and, at times, brutal. We owe it to all farm animals to be aware about how they are reared, so we can make informed decisions about the meat we buy."

There is more information at [www.duckallerfarm.co.uk](http://www.duckallerfarm.co.uk) or at [www.soilassociation.org](http://www.soilassociation.org)

- Ends -

#### **Enquiries**

Claire Wright

Tel: 01404 812531

Mob: 07590 042 627

#### **Note to news editors**

Keith and Roz Partridge have farmed organically at Duckaller Farm, Dawlish, for more than nine years. They have 90 acres and 150 pedigree Berkshire pigs, which are born, bred and reared outdoors with plenty of space, allowing them to behave naturally and live in family groups.