

It's never easy to describe problems with the written word but it does help if you've experienced them first hand. Regrettably Bovine Tb has just become such as experience for me. To see any animals that outwardly appear superbly fit and healthy leave your holding never to return is bad enough but to see unquestionably some of the very best examples of a breed dispatched on your own yard is far beyond words.

Some of you may remember last year's Longhorn victory in the interbreed team of three at the Royal Welsh Show, for me it was the highlight of 25 years exhibiting cattle, our heifer and junior bull were joined by Mayhill Hester, a heifer from David Bevan, sadly the highlight has been very much soured by the loss of Hester as well as two other Royal Welsh champions to a TB breakdown. 20 of his 40 strong herd being taken as reactors or inconclusive.

David lives just on the outskirts of a small Carmarthenshire village and the cows were literally a landmark of that village, it's been referred to as "you know the village on the bottom road with the cows with the big horns". In good Rural Welsh tradition a stream of neighbours called to express their sympathy for the loss, bearing cakes and other sustenance to help David and Richard through this difficult time. The telephone rang continuously with calls from all over the UK and the media including network television tried to reflect the human as well as the bovine tragedy of the event.

Spending 30 years of your life involved with any minority breed is particularly demanding, the breed has become a minority because of an inherent weakness or possibly a change in taste and therefore to get to the scenario where we can hold our own with more modern breeds is hugely gratifying.

If a result of removing these exceptional animals it was felt that the disease was moving towards eradication the pain would be far easier to bear regrettably that does not seem to be the case. A media contributor compared the situation to visiting the dentist with toothache in two rotten teeth, the dentist removing one but leaving the other leaving you with the resultant continuing problem of the toothache.

Bernard Llewellyn, Carreg Cennen Longhorns, May 2012