

A day in the life of... A Knowledge Exchange Manager

In the third of a new series exploring the diverse career opportunities in the sector, Sarah Bolt, Technical Knowledge Exchange Manager at Kingshay, explains the different aspects of the job, and how she supports and transfers knowledge to dairy farmers.

My role is to provide 'inspiration and education' across the dairy industry, in particular spearheading effective knowledge transfer to the Kingshay membership.

I'd love to outline a typical day, but the truth is, no two days are ever the same - a perfect fit for my naturally curious and adventurous personality. My hope is that this article offers insight into the responsibilities of a Knowledge Exchange Manager and highlights the rewarding nature of working in this incredible industry, one I'm immensely proud to be a part of.

Technical aspects

Kingshay specialises in providing independent and practical support to farmers and the wider dairy industry, throughout the UK and further afield. And a key part of my role involves overseeing our technical publications and responding to technical queries.

Much of my time is spent 'horizon scanning' - looking to stay ahead of the game and identifying which topics are most relevant to our members. This process keeps me constantly learning, and I can often be heard to exclaim: 'Every day is a school day!'

Upon finding my next topic, I determine the best way to research



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it further and how to communicate it effectively in a concise four-page format. We produce four publications a month, which are designed to keep members informed with the latest industry insights, research, and best practices. Whether writing them myself, collaborating with colleagues, or working with freelance contributors, I ensure the content is relevant, evidence-based, and practical. I'm a stickler for accuracy and always prioritise peer-reviewed science when applicable. Our audience includes dairy farmers, large animal vets, farm consultants, and other industry stakeholders, who rely on our publications to make informed business decisions. We do the research, so they don't have to!

As the first point of contact for our member advice line, I often tackle technical queries, drawing from nearly 30 years of industry experience. When I don't have an immediate answer, I know exactly where to find it.

One call I'll never forget, was from a dairy farmer whose neighbour had planted a pumpkin patch for Halloween sales and had surplus pumpkins to get rid of. He wanted to know if they were safe to feed to cows or youngstock. Not knowing offhand, I conducted some desktop research. Happily, I went back with the good news that, not only were

pumpkins safe for them, but I also provided suggested feeding levels and nutritional information. While I may not recall the exact details today, I still have my research notes saved for future reference.

Beyond answering queries, I support farmers in choosing the right analysis services for soil, feed, and water testing and help members with interpreting the results. Another key aspect of my role is advising on our range of grass seed mixtures, an area rooted in Kingshay's early cow preference trials. This is one of many pieces of research work undertaken over the years that has earned our reputation for research-backed recommendations.

Shifting focus

I often describe myself as a jack-of-all-trades, but I do have a few specific passions. Milk quality, particularly tackling bactoscan and somatic cell count issues, has always fascinated me. However, in recent years, my focus has shifted to calf health, welfare and ensuring cows have the best start to a productive life. This interest was sparked from my MSc research on the effects of social contact on dairy calves' health and productivity, which I undertook while employed by AHDB some years ago.

I have been fortunate that Kingshay has further supported my

studies, enabling me to complete courses on Holistic Management and FACTS, reinforcing my belief in the pivotal role of healthy soils in shaping a profitable and sustainable future for the farming industry. These specialisms also allow me to provide on-farm consultancy and speak at industry events.

If all of this is not enough to keep one person busy... I am hugely indebted to Kingshay for supporting my involvement in the wider industry.

I am one of the founding forces behind Women in Dairy, where I remain active at both national and local levels, helping steer its direction, coaching facilitators, and shaping the annual conference. My facilitation and coaching skills are put to good use leading farm walks with the Somerset group, and discussion groups through Kingshay, where I hope to inspire and empower farmers to make positive changes on farm.

“Stay passionate, stay curious and embrace change.”

Another passion project is my role as co-host of the ChewinTheCud Podcast, alongside Andrew Jones, which allows me to extend my knowledge-sharing efforts through a new and different media. Whether recording a full episode or just an introduction, this platform has been a fantastic way to engage with the broader agricultural community.

After almost three decades in the dairy industry, the past eight years at Kingshay have been some of the most fulfilling. For those considering a career in the dairy industry, my advice is simple: Stay passionate, stay curious and embrace change. Each day brings new challenges or, as I like to say, 'opportunities for change' and being a part of that is incredibly rewarding.



Sarah Bolt, Kingshay