

## Feeding and caring for livestock in regenerative agriculture: Perceptions and performances of the 'good farmer' in Devon, England

### Summary:

I am part of the Animal Feeding Project which investigates the causes and consequences of feeding nonhuman animals. Whilst the project focuses on feeding animals when we don't need to (e.g. wildlife) and therefore aims to explore emotional connections to nonhumans, literature from rural sociology, anthropology and geography reveals that affective (emotional) aspects to livestock farming (e.g. caring for animals, land and environment) deserve further attention (e.g. Convery et al. 2005; Wilkie 2005, 2010; Baldwin et al. 2017; Gorman 2017). I focus on regenerative farmers because of their goals to regenerate the land and improve biodiversity. Although the concept of being a "good farmer" is useful, the literature does not discuss the role of feeding per se. My goal is to demonstrate that feeding is part of good farming, and the contents of the feed and the way it is fed, as well as other activities that happen on farms, have consequences for the ways farmers relate to their animals and the environment.

### Aim:

- To investigate the affective aspects of human-livestock-environment relations on regenerative farms in Devon, England.


### Research Questions:

- How do regenerative livestock farmers perceive and perform "good" farming in Devon, England?
- How do regenerative livestock farmers' perceptions and performances of "good" farming compare to the "good farmer" identity as described in the literature?
- How do feeding and caring for livestock impact human-animal relationships in regenerative farming?


# What role do feeding and caring play in "good farming" on regenerative farms?


## Preliminary Findings

- There are multiple dimensions of good farming, combining **production of high quality, nutritious food** with various caring practices:

Increasing biodiversity 

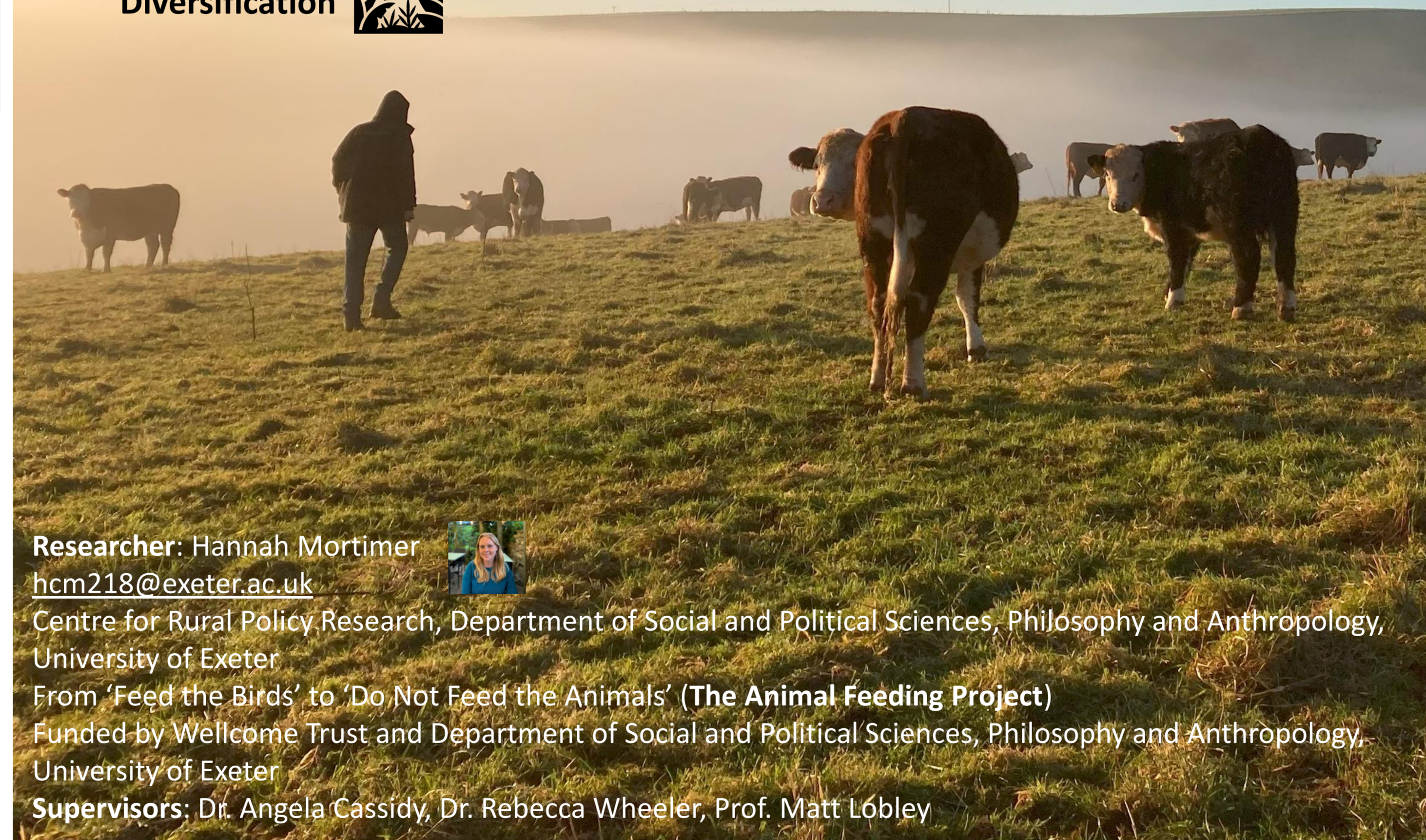
Animal welfare  

Protecting land and soil 

Pasture-fed livestock 

Diversification 

- Some farmers **show emotional connections and attachments to their animals**, making livestock slaughter more difficult
- Farmers justify livestock slaughter by mentioning **high animal welfare** and **environmentally friendly** practices
- Regenerative farming is seen as more **natural** and **environmentally friendly** by its proponents
- Feeding practices viewed favourably involve **pasture-based diets**



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### Methods:

**Ethnographic**, including participant observation, interviews and visual methods (photography, video and photo elicitation).

I visited farms over the course of **twelve months** to discover how **feeding encounters** and **human-animal interactions** change throughout the year and **differ according to the seasons**.



### Conclusions and future work:

- Continuing to collect and analyse data
- There are multiple ways that farmers care for livestock and the environment
- Continuing to research human-animal interactions in rural settings
- Exploring the connections between regenerative agriculture and rewilding
- Impacting policy to improve the lives of both humans and animals



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