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**Scottish Cow-with-Calf Dairy Documentary UK Premiere at Central Scotland Documentary Festival**

**‘A Dairy Story’ follows pioneering husband and wife team who proved keeping dairy calves with their mothers is commercially viable.**

A documentary feature telling the story of a Galloway farm's transformation from conventional to cow-with-calf dairy farming will have its UK premiere at Central Scotland Documentary Festival on 1st November, shortly after its world premiere at IndieCork Film Festival in mid-October.

'A Dairy Story' follows David and Wilma Finlay of Rainton farm in southwest Scotland, who pioneered what became Europe's first commercially viable cow-with-calf dairy system.

For more than twenty years Rainton farm was one of Dumfries and Galloway’s most popular tourism destinations when it operated as Cream o’ Galloway visitor centre. The 340 hectare farm is now better known as The Ethical Dairy, milking 120 cows in a system that keeps calves with their mothers, rather than the standard dairy farming practice of separating cows and calves shortly after birth.

The Finlays converted their conventional dairy farm to organic in the early 2000s, before introducing their pioneering their cow-with-calf system, initially as a pilot in 2012 and introduced permanently in 2016. They weathered years of industry scepticism and financial strain, with David admitting in the film: "It was probably as bleak a time as I can remember in farming, where we had committed ourselves to doing something which was controversial, and a lot of people were praying that it would fail."

Their regenerative approach to dairy farming, which is designed around the milking herd's maternal instincts as well as nature-friendly farming approaches, has led to reductions in labour costs, antibiotic use, greenhouse gas emissions and agro-chemical use, while increasing calf growth, biodiversity, soil carbon, and herd health.

For first-time director Ian Findlay, A Dairy Story was an opportunity to capture on film the story of a farm that he had photographed many times. The Dumfries-based film maker said:

"The goal of the documentary was simply to put a window on this remarkable farm, to explain how their farming system works and to show the dynamics between the herd, their calves and the people who work on the farm.

"What emerged was a story about courage, conviction, and the bonds that make farming - and life - meaningful. I'm thrilled that A Dairy Story has been selected for both IndieCork and Central Scotland Documentary Festival, and I'm looking forward to sharing David and Wilma's story with audiences."

The launch of the documentary carries added poignancy following Wilma Finlay's death from cancer in March 2025. Filming began shortly after her diagnosis in 2022 to record the transformative impact of her and David’s pioneering work.

Producer Lorna Young said:

"We knew we had only a short time to document not just their farming system, but also the passion and conviction that drove Wilma and David to challenge industry norms. This film is as much about human resilience and the courage to stand up for what you believe in as it is about farming.

“David and Wilma's story is a hopeful one, and with the environmental and animal welfare impacts of farming under scrutiny like never before, their pioneering work demonstrates how working with natural systems can make a positive difference."

Filmed over two years, the documentary follows calves from birth to weaning, documenting interactions between dairy cows and their calves rarely seen within a working commercial dairy. It also features contributions from Rainton's Dairy Manager, Charles Ellett, who previously worked at a 1,500-cow herd zero grazing dairy farm, and veterinary surgeon Ruth Layton, an animal food systems specialist and former Chair of the Food Ethics Council.

The programme for the Central Scotland Documentary Festival was announced at 12 noon today, 11 September. Grahame Reid of Central Scotland Documentary Festival said:

“Our festival aims to showcase a wide range of stories that spark discussion, deepen understanding, and connect audiences with the world around them. We are delighted to present the UK Premiere of *A Dairy Story* in competition this year, alongside a wealth of thought-provoking films that reflect the diversity, creativity and commitment of documentary makers in Scotland and beyond.”

The world premiere of ‘A Dairy Story’ will take place at IndieCork, Ireland's premiere festival of independent film on 11th October. Cork, home to around 3,000 dairy farms, shares with Galloway a tradition of family-scale, grass-based farming that faces mounting pressures around sustainability and animal welfare.

Úna Langlois, Co-Director of IndieCork, said:

“IndieCork is honoured to host the world premiere of *A Dairy Story*. This is an important story that resonates for Ireland with our tradition of agriculture and dairy production, and the challenges and environmental issues that come with it. It’s an inspirational story of how things can be done differently. We look forward to giving the Irish audience an opportunity to see this beautiful film and meet the filmmakers here in October.”

**Growing interest in cow-with-calf dairy**

The film comes at a time of growing interest in cow-with-calf dairy farming, in which Rainton farm holds an influential role. David Finlay serves on the Advisory Board of TransformDairyNet, a €3 million EU project coordinated by University College Dublin that aims to promote cow-calf contact systems through a network of farmers, researchers, and industry experts.

The three-year initiative will establish 11 national hubs to share knowledge about keeping dairy calves with their mothers, recognising that cow-calf systems can improve animal welfare and health while maintaining commercial viability. The project's international scope underscores the global relevance of the Finlays' pioneering work.

Across the UK, more than 7,200 dairy farms continue to separate calves from mothers at birth. Only 21 operate cow-with-calf systems, three of them in Scotland, making Rainton's commercial-scale success particularly significant for an industry facing mounting pressure around environmental sustainability and animal welfare.

David Finlay was last month awarded an Honorary Fellowship by SRUC (Scotland's Rural College) for his contribution to sustainable agriculture, and on 21st October 2025, he will address the World Dairy Summit in Santiago, Chile, speaking to the International Dairy Federation about ‘Dairying Beyond the Paradigm.’

David added:

"When we started this journey, people thought we were mad. Now we're seeing growing interest from farmers across Europe who want to explore alternative ways to do dairy farming. The EU investment in cow-calf research shows this isn't just about our farm, it's about the future of the industry.

“I’m proud that cow-with-calf dairying and regenerative farming systems are now being taken increasingly seriously. In Scotland we have the knowledge, the landscapes and the farming traditions to lead a regenerative agriculture transformation."

**Screening Details**

**Central Scotland Documentary Festival**

'A Dairy Story' will screen at Central Scotland Documentary Festival on Saturday 1st November at 7.45pm at the Macrobert Arts Centre in Stirling.

**Tickets are now on sale at** [**https://www.macrobertartscentre.org/cs-doc-fest**](https://www.macrobertartscentre.org/cs-doc-fest)

**IndieCork Film Festival**

The world premiere of ‘A Dairy Story’ will take place at The Arc Cinema in Cork on Saturday 11th October at 4pm.

For information and tickets about IndieCork visit <https://indiecork.com/>

**Synopsis & Film Details**

Every day, thousands of dairy calves are separated from their mothers at birth. A Dairy Story follows a husband-and-wife team as they risk everything to prove there's another way.

David and Wilma Finlay have transformed their farm in southwest Scotland from conventional to regenerative and, most radically, pioneering commercial scale cow-with-calf dairy farming. Filmed over two years, A Dairy Story shows their determination to reinvent dairy farming by putting nature and animal welfare first. Following calves from birth to weaning, we see the herd's profound capacity for maternal care in the sweeping beauty of the Scottish landscape.

This is a story about the bonds that matter most. It addresses universal themes of connection, and topics of animal sentience, the environment and system change. A Dairy Story shows how changing a farming system changes everything; from the lives of the animals to the wellbeing of the farmers, and perhaps even the future of dairy farming itself.

‘A Dairy Story’ is a 78-minute documentary, directed by Ian Findlay, and is his directorial debut.

The trailer for ‘A Dairy Story’ can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/LtbQE24Z-NI>

More information about the film can be found at [www.adairystory.com](http://www.adairystory.com)

**ENDS**

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**Photos and EPK**: Images and information about the film can be accessed at: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/c93th5lkuxzix644gtluu/AC8IklJoQr-6nkUAMIYxELA?rlkey=ceibr53c7hdtcwkn9red4n4ry&st=8xq3uohy&dl=0>

**Notes to Editors**:

* A Dairy Story was directed, filmed and edited by Ian Findlay, and written and produced by Lorna Young, both based in Dumfries.

* Interview opportunities with David Finlay, Charles Ellett and the film makers are available by arrangement.

* Rainton farm, better known as [The Ethical Dairy](https://theethicaldairy.co.uk/), is located near Kirkcudbright in Dumfries & Galloway.

* David and Wilma’s pioneering work has been recognised by multiple industry awards, including the Special Recognition award at the Soil Association’s BOOM Awards 2025, Holyrood’s Net Zero Award and the Outstanding Achievement award at VIBES, Scotland’s environmental business awards. David Finlay also won the Farmer of the Year Award at the 2019 CEVA Animal Welfare Awards.

* The original score was written and performed by young Scottish composers Finlay Harrison and Lewis Findlay, both of whom studied Audio Engineering at Riverside Music College near Glasgow.

* Early development of the film was supported by South of Scotland Enterprise.

* 'A Dairy Story' will have its world premiere at IndieCork Film Festival on Saturday 11th October 2025.

* [TransformDairyNet](https://transformdairynet.eu/) is a €3 million EU-funded project coordinated by University College Dublin, running 2024-2027, aimed at promoting cow-calf contact systems across Europe through a network of 26 partners including farmers, researchers, and industry experts.