

Today we chat to Aedán O Huallacháin a farmer based in Ventry on the Dingle Peninsula who owns and runs the very popular Hold a Baby Lamb and Beehive Huts attraction. The farm is in Glanfahan just past Ventry Village on the Sleah Head drive, approx. 8km from Dingle town. You will see the signs for the Hold a Bay Lamb and there is a parking area close by. The first thing that you will notice is the magnificent view that the farm enjoys, and the little beehive huts behind the farm buildings.

### **How long have you farmed on the Dingle Peninsula?**

*I grew up on this farm which my Mam and Dad were farming full time since 1980. It had previously belonged to my Grandparents, so it has been in my family a long time. My great-grandmother's family were Sayers and the Sayers family farmed this land in the 19th century. I have only taken over in recent years when I came back home to Dingle. Before that I had been working as a ship's officer for ten years, which was an interesting career. I was involved in offshore seismic surveys, and oil tankers, and mega yachts, so I travelled all over the world including South America, South East Asia, New Zealand and even the Arctic Circle. It was a really interesting time in my life and I got to see the world, but eventually I suppose I just wanted to come home and settle down.*

### **Tell us about your typical day**

*Our day starts early as we normally have around 260 sheep on the farm which have to be looked after. Our flock is made up of two different breeds of sheep, Dorset Horn and Swaledales. Swaledales are a fairly new breed of sheep to Ireland, and have only been introduced to farms here in the last 15 years. These two breeds suit our farm and our location on the West coast, you need an animal that will be hardy and suited to mountains. Our sheep begin lambing in December and we take them down to the fields near the farmyard for that and lamb them indoors, the harsh weather would be very tough on a newborn lamb if it is born outside. We will feed them for a few months and then they go back up to the mountain. We would have hundreds of lambs in the fields which is a really lovely sight. We normally have 30 - 40 pet lambs on the farm every year, which all must be bottle fed by hand. I had the idea of opening the farm to the public because over the years we noticed an increasing interest in the farm and sheep, by the tourists, visiting the peninsula. A lot of people would not have had first-hand experience of farm animals, because they live*

*in cities, or grew up in cities, so this is a completely new experience for them. People get a great kick out of holding the lambs and feeding them, or watching our sheepdog working, and it is so nice to be able to give them a new and unforgettable experience during their holiday. It is a really Irish experience, and a way of life for us and hopefully this will continue for years to come*

**Who is your greatest influence?**

*My grandmother Mary, who originally owned the farm was a huge influence on me and then my father and mother who give me support and encouragement.*

**What is your favourite part of the peninsula?**

*I have to say that when you climb to the top of Mount Eagle and look out over the Blasket Islands it is absolutely stunning. There is no place in the world like it!*

**What is your favourite part of the day?**

*I just love getting up in the morning and going to work on our farm. We live in such a beautiful place in Glanfahan, and to start your day looking at what we look at every day makes you a very happy person. We have magnificent views of the Blasket Islands and the Skelligs in the distance and it is something that you never take for granted. I love that I get to work with my Dad, and that we are giving our visitors enjoyment and a new experience which enables us to keep farming. It is sometimes a hard life being a farmer, but it is also a very good life where you are at one with nature. I hope to keep doing this for many years to come and to keep it safe for the next generation.*

**What would you do if you won the Lottery?**

*That's a tough question but I consider myself a very happy man and I wouldn't change a thing.*

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