



Mulder - family farm



Arjan Mulder



66 hectares



improvement of
grassland management

MEADOW BIRD CONSERVATION THROUGH PREDATOR EXCLUSION AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Protecting meadow birds on dairy farms is a considerable challenge, especially in densely populated regions such as the province of South Holland. In this area, Arjan Mulder and his parents run a 90-hectare dairy farm on peat soil. The 150 dairy cows graze on a platform of 65 hectares; the remaining 25 hectares consist of semi-natural grasslands. The goal is to graze for 200 days a year, during which the cows consume about 10 kg of dry matter from fresh grass daily in the summer. Arjan is passionately committed to the conservation of meadow birds on the farm. In spring, he regularly walks rounds across the land to monitor the birds' behaviour and population numbers. Meadow birds face several threats, including the loss of suitable habitat and predation. To support them, the farm focuses on two main pillars: deterring predators and improving habitat quality. Fences have been strategically placed around the plots to keep predators such as cats, stoats, and polecats out.

This gives chicks a better chance to grow safely and leave the nest independently. A remotely controlled gate allows access for cows and machinery without letting unwanted animals in. The farm also implements targeted measures to maintain an attractive habitat. Ten hectares are reserved for delayed mowing, and this area alone hosts about sixty nesting meadow birds annually. Floating nest platforms (rafts) have been placed in the ditches, which are primarily used by black terns — resulting in many successfully fledged chicks. As black terns catch insects from dung pats, this also helps reduce insect pressure on the livestock. In spring, meadow bird nests are located daily to prevent damage from mowing or grazing. Thanks to Arjan's dedication, the meadow bird population on the farm is thriving. He is therefore determined to continue and further intensify these efforts in the coming years.

Farmer Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kF3ziV7tpEU>



Photo credit: photos generated from farmer interview - AERES