



For somebody who has only just turned 25, Beth Farmer has already managed to fit an awful lot into her young life.

Coming from a farming family there can be no skirting around her hugely appropriate surname - she was out lambing when her call-up came in 2022 for the Scottish national curling team.

Positive covid tests by more established players saw this young athlete out lambing in the morning and then, within 24 hours, landing in Canada for the World Women's Curling Championships.

"Of course, it was a really exciting time," recalls Beth, who says she fell into the sport because of her mother's sister marrying into a keen curling family.

"I used to go to the local rink with my cousins as I was growing up and then started competing and getting picked for extra coaching."

Beth, who grew up on a Kinross farm, was very much on a pathway towards the 2026 Olympics but decided to step off the rollercoaster of elite competition.

"I think the general public probably has no idea the kind of pressure athletes at that level are under," explains Beth.

"It's hard for everyone, but working within farming it was so difficult to keep other job options going alongside. Coaches kept encouraging us to keep up with careers remotely - jumping on a laptop between training sessions - but you can't really do that when you are a shepherd!

"We were training five days a week during the day and that just couldn't work with the farming lifestyle. Farming's a job that you are either all in, or all out. You can't just be dipping your toe in when there is livestock involved."

Although it was a tough decision, Beth says returning to shepherding full-time was without any doubt the right move for her.

"It was like a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders," says Beth.

"I still keep up with friends that curl at elite level but leaving that world behind has opened up all sorts of new opportunities and I am so much happier."

Throwing herself into the young farmers' club movement has helped plug the gap left by Beth's exit from competitive sport.

She is current chairperson of Kinross JAC and was runner-up in the prestigious 2024 Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs (SAYFC) Young Farmer of the Year competition.

Her club has named Farmstrong Scotland as its chosen worthy cause for the year and the organisation's focus on physical, mental, and social wellbeing is something Beth, who has switched from freelance shepherding to working full time at Parks of Aldie Farm, is keen to promote.

"Rather than the girl who curls, I now want to be known for just being me and it's been exciting to figure out who that is," she explains.

"Stepping up in young farmers has been a big help in making that transition and I have been determined to take every opportunity that presents itself."



Following on from her success in the Young Farmer of the Year competition, Beth secured a place on the SAYFC 2025 Agri & Rural Affairs Study Tour and come November will be jetting off on a two-week learning trip to Texas.

Closer to home and Beth has put her love of running to good use. Earlier this year she completed the Inverness Half Marathon to raise funds for SAYFC's Big Build campaign to create a new national headquarters. She kept putting her best foot forward closer to home by encouraging local YFC members to 'Run to Norfolk' in aid of Farmstrong.

The idea came about because of an exchange with Diss Young Farmers' Club in Norfolk, with members sponsored to clock up the equivalent of the 386 miles between the two clubs within a couple of weeks of intensive running around the local area.

"It's been great to see people, some of whom hadn't run before or who said they hated it, coming out and getting behind this Farmstrong fundraiser. It didn't matter if they only wanted to walk to start off with, we all did it as clubmates and soon started knocking the miles off the more people got into it. It's great to think some of those that got involved will carry on and keep running."

Beth says the club running nights pushed people out of their comfort zones. She believes very strongly that the covid pandemic had a negative impact on all young people; but especially those who missed out on joining up and getting involved.

"I was that little bit older - my generation missed things like 21st birthday parties - but those younger ones never really got started socialising. Their school lessons went online and there was no making new friends at young farmers. It has definitely taken them longer to get involved and really start interacting. It's been brilliant to see them coming onboard and getting more confident and sociable. The running really seemed to help get a good team spirit going."

Money is still coming in for the run, but around £800 was raised.

"Supporting Farmstrong is really important to me," says Beth. "Like a lot of people I heard about the farmers from New Zealand who came over to Scotland to talk about Farmstrong."

"Two of the things they spoke about - connectivity and exercise - really work for my own wellbeing."

"With curling being a team sport I always had company when I was playing or training. However, once I went back to shepherding I had to push myself out of my own space. I hadn't stepped foot in a gym since my funded sessions ended but now I'm going three or four times a week on my own terms. I've met people from all walks of life - neither curling or farming - and we are like a wee family. Rather than learning from team coaches I'm learning from people from all sorts of different backgrounds and it's great to talk about other things."

With her family's farm being sold, Beth has made a complete switch from helping at home and freelance shepherding to committing to full-time employment, a role which involves looking after 950 mule ewes.

"Giving up that control of being self-employed made me feel uneasy at first," reveals Beth. "But actually it's great to be part of a team and have the security of a regular wage."

"Ambition wise, I just want to take every opportunity that comes my way and keep learning; maybe making it to head shepherd one day. Of course, I would love my own farm, but I've learnt from curling that you can spend all your time fixed on the future and forget to enjoy the here and now."



Trio & Tested: Three simple steps that helped Beth Farmer on the path to better wellbeing:

- Push yourself out of your comfort zone. Beth nearly didn't enter Young Farmer of the Year but ended up taking the runner-up spot, meeting lots of new people and going on to successfully apply for a place on a study tour to Texas.
- Live in the moment. Much of Beth's early life was spent following rigid training programmes and preparing for competitions many months in advance. She has found it liberating to live her new life more spontaneously.
- Connect with people from all walks of life. Spending time with people away from the worlds of either curling or farming has been good for Beth's wellbeing. She has learnt a lot from interacting with people from diverse backgrounds.

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