

Hampshire County Council Rural Business of the Year Award

Marwell Conservation has been a successful tourist attraction for more than 35 years. Recently, Marwell has introduced a number of measures to improve environmental performance. In 2007, 90 per cent of all waste generated was either composted or recycled. In addition, Marwell is committed to using local suppliers in a bid to support the economy and reduce the environmental impact of deliveries. Marwell is a major local employer with 65 per cent of staff living within a 10 mile radius of the park.

Alresford Chocolate Company employs eight people and has an estimated turnover of £250,000. Based in a converted dairy, the company has grown by 148 per cent and plans to grow by a further 132 per cent in 2008. Much of this businesses growth can be attributed to expansion into corporate team building workshops with notable clients such as BT, Dell and Shell. In recognition of the high standards of chocolate production, Alresford Chocolate Company has won numerous awards and recently secured a contract to supply Fortnum & Mason.

Stable Close Equine Practice employs six people and has been providing veterinary services to horse-owners since 2003. Investment in the most up-to-date technology and the delivery of excellent customer service forms the backbone of the business's continued success. Stable Close Equine is leading the field in portable equine medicine with a dedicated, enthusiastic team offering clients a range of modern treatments.

Offwell Farm is a working dairy farm which also incorporates a successful brewery and barn store. The business is praised at national level for its positive impact on the stewardship of the land, the productive working relationships built up with other rural businesses and the substantial contribution made to the local community. Judges were particularly impressed with the business's ability to diversify in answer to the challenges facing rural industry.