

Small Farms Association

Newsletter



AUTUMN 2012

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It's a dog's life!

A dog called Fred having a go at ploughing

Dear Members,

It's definitely an understatement to say it's been a difficult summer for harvesting our crops due to the heavy and persistent rain. Thankfully, harvesting has finished, helped by a warmer and dryer September. Recently, I wasn't surprised to read that during June, July and August there was a monthly average of 14.4in (366.8mm) of rain across Britain - an amount second only to 1912, when there was 15.1in (384.4mm). It seems the weather has been extreme in many parts of the world, with torrential flooding in Japan, parts of Russia and prolonged periods of drought in parts of North America, causing grain and fodder shortages. UK grain yields are low, as are yields in other parts of the world; so we can expect higher grain prices and price-rises for bread and other commodities.

The controversial badger cull is due to start soon. Initially, two pilot culls are planned: one in Gloucestershire and in Somerset. As we go to print, a licence has been issued only for the Gloucestershire pilot.

To me it seems like a knee-jerk reaction, rather like kicking your dog when you lose your temper.

In its present form, the badger cull could make the situation worse by spreading the disease through perturbation; and the fact that both healthy and sick badgers will be culled, alienating both those supporting and objecting to the cull. I also read a far-fetched report in my local weekly paper, *The Kingsbridge Gazette*, that a cull might be planned in the South Hams. Thankfully our local MP dismissed the suggestion as being highly speculative!

Finally, the future shape of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is still uncertain since many Member States have submitted amendments. As usual it will take a good deal of time to find acceptable compromises to satisfy all participants. Pippa Woods, an Honorary member of the SFA, who is also chair of the Family Farmers' Association is organising a meeting in the House of Commons (sponsored by Andrew George MP) on 17th October on the future shape of the CAP at which it is hoped there will be some insight into the package that will be on offer.

I hope to see many of you at this year's AGM on 22nd November at Ugborough Village Hall. Please see the notice on page 3.

Statements and opinions expressed in articles, reviews and other material herein are those of the authors and not necessarily of the SFA.

While every care has been taken in the compilation of this information and every attempt made to present up-to-date and accurate information, we cannot guarantee that inaccuracies will not occur.

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Small Farms Association
Ley Coombe Farm, Modbury,
Devon, PL21 0TU.
Tel 01548 830302
Fax 01548 831272
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Editor: Mary Talbot-Rosevear



Heather Laird-Ruocco on Paddy and Karen Sings on Bertie on Ceri Jayes' World Horse Welfare Fun Ride on 7th October

BHS encourages farmers and equestrians to take part in Paths for Communities

The British Horse Society (BHS) has encouraged equestrians to submit applications for new bridleways as part of the Paths for Communities project, a Natural England initiative to encourage local communities to help provide new bridleways. Clearly farmers are an essential part of the jigsaw.

Mark Weston, BHS Director of Access, Safety and Welfare, said: "It is important that horse riders identify suitable routes and submit applications to this scheme so that we can increase the small percentage of the rights of way network that horse riders currently enjoy. It may be possible also to put forward proposals to join up existing bridleways that are not currently linked up."

Paths for Communities projects must include some element of new Public Right of Way creation. In most cases this will be a bridleway creation. Community groups can apply for a grant to help create the route and the scheme will operate until March 2014, with a total fund of £2million.

For more information on Paths for Communities and how to submit a project, please visit www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/rightsofway/p4c.aspx.

For further information please contact: Alison Coleman, BHS, Tel: 02476 840463 or a.coleman@bhs.org.uk.

Celebration of Devon food, farming and nature

On the 6th October a group of farmers and nature conservationists met at West Town Farm, Ide, Exeter. The event celebrated the work of farmers and food producers in providing both good food and an improved natural environment. The event was sponsored this year by Devon Local Nature Partnership, Devon Wildlife Trust, RSPB and the Centre for Rural Policy Research. The event was a great success providing a rare chance for an eclectic mix of people and enterprises – from mainstream to radical – to get together and share practices and ideas. There were a lot of success stories. Plans are already afoot for a similar event next year.

Photos, video and other information are available from the Devon Food, Farming and Nature website: <http://www.devonfarmingfoodandnature.org/>

If you would like to be informed about next year's event please email M.A.Stephen@exeter.ac.uk



FOR SALE SMALL BALES OF HAY
**Saved without rain and
suitable for horses**
Contact Phil Hosking on
Tel: 01548-830302

SFA 2012 Annual General Meeting
Thursday, 22 November 2012, 7 p.m.
Ugborough Village Hall

Members' papers are enclosed with this newsletter

Light refreshments will be served during the evening

Please come and support

RSVP to Tel: 01548 830302

Devon Hedge Week 2012

Devon Hedge Week runs every year at the end of October. In 2012 the series of events begins on **Saturday 27 Oct** and runs through until **Sunday 4 November**. The week is run by a partnership of organisations lead by **Devon Hedge Group** with the aim of highlighting the fantastic wildlife resource that is the Devon hedge. This year's theme is 'Hedges for the Future' offers a real diversity of topics including: 'hedges for fuel', 'how to adapt to climate change', hedges for food and 'hedge-laying Devon style'.

Events covering issues such as laying, walling, crafts, hedgerow foods and wildlife are being organised; and are spread all around the county. Details of dates and locations of events can be found on the Devon Hedge Group, FWAG South West and Devon Wildlife Trust websites at: www.hedges@devon.gov.uk, www.fwagsw.org.uk/events/devon-hedge-week/ and www.devonwildlifetrust.org/devon-hedge-week/

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL FOR THESE EVENTS

We can help you

That's the message from RABI (Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution) in its newly launched DVD in which it shows how it can help farming families in difficulties.

R.A.B.I. works in strict confidence, so they are especially grateful to six people of different ages, from different backgrounds, and helped in different ways for volunteering to tell their stories. They include a student and a farm worker's widow, a young farmer and a working family, a middle-aged farm manager and a single parent. The thing they have in common is that, thanks to R.A.B.I., their future looks brighter.

The DVD, 'We do more than you think' will be released this October. If you would like a free copy please telephone Hayley Paintin on 01865 724931 or visit the RABI website and view it online.

RABI Helpline.

For confidential help & advice call 0300 3037373 or email grants@rabi.org.uk.

RABI is a grant-making charity that supports members of the farming community facing need, hardship or distress. Founded in 1860 they have an unbroken history of providing long-term care and emergency help. The help is provided for retired farmers, farm workers and working farmers and their families who find themselves in financial difficulties.

Are you a farmer, forester, farming contractor, woodland owner or horticultural business?

If so, there are grants available to help you meet one or more of the following objectives:

- Improving animal health and welfare
- Reducing energy usage
- Improving the management of manures and/or farm nutrients
- Improving soil quality
- Improving water resource management
- Improving the use of forestry resources

Grants are available for many items that you may already be considering, so why not see if you can get up to 50% of the costs from Defra?

There is a funding round in progress now, so we would advise that you book your free site visit as soon as possible.

For further information, please contact Fiona Edwards at Devon Renaissance (DR) on Tel: 01837-658643 or email her to fiona@DRcompany.co.uk

update on acute Schmallenberg virus disease in cattle



©Rebecca Hosking Healthy lambs at Ley Coombe, South Devon

Enhanced surveillance recently introduced by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) and the Scottish Agricultural College has led to the detection of evidence of acute Schmallenberg virus (SBV) disease in adult dairy cattle at nineteen premises in England, including five farms in the West Country.

Cattle affected by acute SBV may develop signs such as a transient drop in milk yield, fever and diarrhoea. These signs in adult cattle are short-lived and the disease is not fatal; farmers and veterinarians should be aware that other agents of disease as well as SBV may cause these signs. Adult cattle may also be infected with SBV without showing any clinical signs. Following infection, it is believed that animals become immune and female animals that develop immunity before they become pregnant are unlikely to give birth to affected offspring. Female ruminants infected during pregnancy may give birth to malformed offspring.

Advice on investigating suspected incidents of acute SBV disease in cattle is available at: http://vla.defra.gov.uk/science/docs/sci_schmallenberg_pvs_guidance_letter.pdf and from AHVLA and SAC investigation centres.

Whilst not a notifiable disease, farmers are advised to contact their veterinary surgeons if they encounter suspect cases of SBV disease in their herds or flocks. Veterinary surgeons should then contact their AHVLA/SAC laboratory if they suspect infection with the virus. Further information on SBV is available at: http://vla.defra.gov.uk/science/sci_schmallenberg.htm

The introduction of enhanced surveillance for acute Schmallenberg virus disease in cattle followed the successful enhanced surveillance – introduced in December 2011 – for foetal deformities which were the consequence of the incursion of Schmallenberg into southern England in 2011.

The enhanced surveillance for acute Schmallenberg virus infection includes provision of case definitions for the disease, a form used by cattle veterinarians in practice to submit information and samples, advice on sampling and testing, and free testing for incidents in counties previously unaffected by Schmallenberg virus infection.

Defra News roundup

Defra considering ban on imports of ash trees

A ban on imports of ash trees to combat the threat of the tree disease, *Chalara fraxinea*, could be in place as early as next month, Environment Secretary Owen Paterson said this week.

The disease causes leaf loss; and has already killed trees in England, Scotland and parts of mainland Europe. It is believed the infected trees in the UK came from nurseries in Europe. A ban would also mean trees from infected areas would not be able to be moved to other locations.

Suspected cases of the disease should be reported to the Forestry Commission so that appropriate action can be taken to prevent the disease from spreading.

A consultation on managing the threat to the UK's ash trees is due to end on 26 October. A ban could then come into force before the main planting season gets underway in November. The Government will work with the industry and those that grow or trade in ash plants to minimise the impact a ban will have on their businesses.

New Government Website

GOV.UK is launching on 17 October

GOV.UK is the new website that will bring most of the information published by government online in one place and will become the starting point for all government digital services.

You can see a public test version, or 'beta', of GOV.UK now at www.gov.uk. It is still in development at the moment, but its aim is to be "simpler, clearer and faster" for users; and above all, 'user-friendly'.

Phase one of GOV.UK will focus on users who currently visit the Directgov and Businesslink websites. From 17 October, people looking for business and citizen information and services on these sites will be redirected to the new GOV.UK site. Where people have bookmarked links on Directgov and Business Link, these will be automatically redirected to the relevant page on GOV.UK.

The second phase of GOV.UK will see information from departments (including Defra) and a handful of non-departmental bodies move to GOV.UK. Key 'corporate' and policy information will move over by 31 March 2013, and the process will be finished by December 2013.

The third phase of GOV.UK will involve moving information published by other agencies and non-departmental bodies over to the new platform (with some exceptions). This will take about 12 months and will be complete by March 2014.

Defra News roundup

New Defra Ministers



The Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP was appointed Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in September, replacing Caroline Spelman in the recent Cabinet reshuffle.

Owen Paterson joined Defra after serving in the Cabinet as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland from May 2010. Owen Paterson has been MP for North Shropshire since 1997. In opposition, Mr Paterson was Shadow Agricultural Whip, Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Shadow Minister for Transport and Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. As Shadow Minister for Agriculture, he examined the problem of bovine TB in cattle and produced a Green Paper on fisheries management.

Mr Paterson was born in Whitchurch, Shropshire. He read History at Cambridge University and speaks French and German. Before entering politics Mr Paterson joined his family's leather business, where he became Managing Director in 1994.

He is interested in horses, racing and eventing, architecture, trees and history. He is married with three children.



David Heath MP, the Liberal Democrat MP for Somerton and Frome, is the Minister of State for Agriculture and Food. David Heath has been the MP for Somerton and Frome, a rural constituency and important dairy farming area, since 1997. Before this he served as Leader of Somerset County Council and also acted as Parliamentary consultant for the

World Wide Fund for Nature.

In Parliament, David Heath has held a number of front-bench positions, including acting as spokesperson for agriculture, fisheries and food and as a spokesperson for work and pensions. He has also served on the Science and Technology Select Committee. Until his appointment as Minister, he served as Deputy Leader of the House.

He studied at Oxford University where he gained an MA in Physiological Sciences. He subsequently took further studies in Ophthalmic Optics at City University.

He is married with two children and used to breed pedigree Tamworth pigs.



Lord de Mauley was appointed as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State. His family has a farming background, has been a Government Whip in the Lords since 2010, as well as being Government spokesman on environment,



The voice of the small farmer

Ley Coombe Farm
Modbury
IVYBRIDGE
Devon PL21 0TU

Phone: 01548 830 302
Fax: 01548 831 272
Email: philhosking01@btinternet.com

We're on the Web!
www.small-farms-association.org

Annual Family Membership £20.00

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

The Small Farms Association was formed in October 1997 because of the reluctance of major farming organisations to support the needs of small farmers. Since its inception, the SFA has addressed the concerns and needs of small farms by the action it takes.

- * *Lobbying MPs and other public representatives*
- * *Communicating the views of small farms to DEFRA*
- * *Working in partnership with other farm organisations*
- * *Contributing to policy, with a small farms' slant*
- * *Working to our own Constitution and Code of Practice*
- * *Advice and support available to members*
- * *Opportunities to socialise*
- * *Training opportunities*
- * *Free quarterly newsletter, including members' adverts*
- * *A website, including opportunities to advertise*

Please help us to continue the work on your behalf by providing feedback on topical farming issues and recruiting new members.

Looking for space?

A young couple run a small local business based in Landscope, making Biodynamic and Organic fruit Cordials. Their brand is called **Tom Morrow's**. They have a regular stall at the Totnes Good Food Market and supply a number of local shops.

They are keen to find others to share the facilities they have created in a small barn in Landscope. **What they are offering is a processing space, suitable for packing, processing and basic cooking.** They can provide utensils, pots, refrigeration, a pasteuriser and storage facilities; and are happy to share. It's a lovely spot to work.

They charge a daily rate of £25. They are flexible, however, to other arrangements should there be an alternative request. Charges for short and long term storage can be negotiated.

They also have biodynamic and organic fruit pulp on offer, which is a by-product of their cordials. In the past, it has been successfully made in to fruit leathers, jams etc. They often have pulp from raspberries, elderberries, strawberries, sour cherries (great for pie filling), blackcurrants among other things. If anyone is interested in using this pulp they would love to discuss and negotiate a deal.

Please get in contact if you have any thoughts or ideas. They would love to hear from you. You can contact Becky on the following numbers: Telephone 01803 762797 or email becky@tommorrow.co.uk.

Totnes Good Food Market

Regularly attracting over 50 traders each month, the Totnes Good Food Sunday market (TGFS) has become the biggest fine food and drink market in Devon; and is rapidly becoming the largest in the South West. Launched in June 2010 with just over 20 producers, the market has grown month by month both in reputation and popularity. It attracts food lovers from all over the region, has been award-nominated and warranted mentions in local and national newspapers and magazines.

Like all good food markets, TGFS boasts local and sustainably sourced produce as its core: hence three-quarters of its traders come from within a 30 mile radius of Totnes.

Every 3rd Sunday of the month a fine selection of fresh game, beef, lamb, pork, goat; chicken and duck; plus organically farmed meats and poultry can be found at the market. Great staples such as choice local cheeses, fresh bread, chutneys, cordials and jams; delicious bakery produce including quiches, pies, pasties, cakes of every description and all things crumbly. Country wines, beers and ciders by the bottle and flagon; the freshest of veg, seasonal salads, even edible flowers; as well as elephant garlic, fresh herbs and smoked, flavoured salts. Vegetarian are also catered for (as well as those with gluten sensitivity). Chilli lovers are spoilt for choice. This market is well worth a visit.

FORTHCOMING MARKET DATES FOR 2012:

10 am to 3 pm on the third Sunday of the month

Sunday October 21st

Sunday November 18th

Sunday December 16th - **CHRISTMAS SPECIAL**