

# Small Farms Association Newsletter



Beef calves at Ley Coombe, South Devon

© Roger Hosking

## Dear Members,

I hope you are well and that your farming is going according to plan. Finally the rain has come.

Some time ago I read John Cherrington's memoirs of his farming career in which he said what he remembered most was the weather and how it affected his farming activities [*"On the Smell of an Oily Rag and Lifting my Nose from the Grindstone"*]. John Cherrington was a bank manager's son who worked on farms in New Zealand and South America before he started farming in his own right in Hampshire in the 1930s. He was never afraid to try new techniques; and became a pioneer of low-cost dairying and extensive arable farming.

In those days corn harvesting was done by cutting the corn with a binder and standing the sheaves in stacks to dry, and then carted to be put in ricks and then threshed by threshing machines in the autumn or winter. He remembered one very wet harvest in 1946, I think, when he had difficulty in getting the sheaves dry enough to put them in the ricks. So he built very narrow ricks to

allow the sheaves to dry out. When he put the wheat sheaves through the thresher there were great clouds of blue smoke everywhere. So much has changed since those days because of technological advances. But without rain we are still at the mercy of the Gods.

Beef and Sheep meat prices are holding up well; but it's not as good for the dairy and pig sectors because of the rise in cereals prices and other inputs.

I see that the NFU are getting concerned about low milk prices. It's a bit late in the day for that! It's such a pity they didn't back the milk campaign we started all those years ago and ended up with the FUW, FARM, NFWI, RABDF and FFA as partners. As for Mr Paice *"banging some heads together"* [Jim Paice MP (*Mission Milk*, 16 November 2010)], I'm still waiting for the action!

There are details of topical farming issues further on in the newsletter, such as HLS, Killerton badger vaccination project and our annual BBQ on 23 July. Happy reading; and I hope to meet you at the BBQ!

*Philip Hosking*

**Summer 2011**

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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.

## SFA News published by

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## Environmental White Paper creeps into the public arena

The first white paper on the natural environment in 20 years, which pledges to reverse years of wild life and landscape destruction, was published on 7 June. The paper commits the Coalition Government to making the conservation of wildlife and landscape part of national economic planning.

Yet the publication of this far-reaching white paper received very little attention in the national media. In fact, according to some journalists, the media were excluded from the launch and there was no obvious effort to drum up interest! Could it be that the Secretary of State was so scarred by the plans to sell off the national forests that she is hiding her light under a bushel to avoid a government revolt by some of her coalition colleagues?

*“Nature belongs to us all, and we’ve all got a vested interest in protecting it.”*

The proposals set out in the white paper provide a detailed programme of action to repair damage done to the environment in the past, and urges everyone to get involved in helping nature to flourish at all levels – from neighbourhoods, to farmers, to national parks.

The plans are directly linked to the groundbreaking research in the National Ecosystem Assessment also published in June that showed the strong economic arguments for safeguarding and enhancing the natural environment.

The White Paper also acts on the recommendations of ‘Making Space for Nature’, a report into the state of England’s wildlife sites, led by Professor John Lawton and published in Sept. 2010, which showed that England’s wildlife sites are fragmented and not able to respond to the pressures of climate change and other pressures we put on the land.

Launching the white paper, Environment Secretary Caroline Spelman said: “The natural environment matters to us all – not just because it makes us feel good when we stumble across a bluebell wood or spot a pair of goldfinches, but because we are now all able to see the terrible price we would pay if we lost what we have or neglected to care for it. Nature belongs to us all, and we’ve all got a vested interest in protecting it.

“That’s why the true value of nature should be built in to the decisions we make – as individuals, organisations, businesses and governments – so that we become the first generation to leave the environment in a better condition than we found it. This is what ‘The Natural Choice’ will help us all achieve.”

The White Paper aims to improve the quality of the natural environment across England, halt the decline in habitats and species, and strengthen the connection between people and nature. The new way of looking at nature should help the growth of a green economy, which treats natural capital in a responsible and fair way, encouraging businesses to use that capital sustainably. The actions contained in the White Paper aim to create a radical shift in how we view our natural assets by incorporating the natural environment into economic planning and ensuring there are opportunities for businesses (including farming) that are good for nature and good for a strong green economy.

The Natural Environment White Paper, ‘The Natural Choice’ can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/).

In June the Government also published its response to Prof. Sir John Lawton’s independent review of England’s wildlife sites and ecological network, *Making Space for Nature*. This can also be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/natural/whitepaper/).

### SFA Summer Barbeque

**Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2011, starting at 7 p.m.**

**Hillhead Farm, Ugborough, PL21 OHQ**

*kindly hosted by David and Jane Johns*

***Tickets: £10.00 per adult, £5.00 per child (under 12)***

***Food and drink are included in the ticket price***

***Food to include meat as well as sausages and burgers***

***PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE BY PHONE OR POST - TEL: 01548 830302***

***Cover available if weather is inclement***

*If any members play a musical instrument, we would be delighted if they wish to bring it along (provided it's portable)*



# Killerton Badger Vaccination Project



One of Killerton's Friesians

©Julia Proctor

At the National Trust Killerton estate in Devon, a four year badger vaccination programme that aims to pave the way to the widespread use of vaccination as a way of tackling bovine TB in cattle started this spring.

Funded by the National Trust (NT), as it owns many farms in hot-spot areas, the programme will demonstrate vaccination as a viable alternative to culling as a means of controlling the wildlife reservoir of the disease.

Bovine TB has blighted cattle farming in the UK for decades and costs the taxpayer in England tens of millions of pounds each year in destroying cattle and compensating affected farmers. As a major landowner with significant agricultural and conservation responsibilities, the NT wants to play its part in helping to find a solution to this issue.

Mark Harold, Director for the NT's South West region, said:

*"In many areas of the UK there are clearly practical problems in implementing an effective cull of badgers to reduce bovine TB in cattle. In these instances, vaccination of badgers would appear to be the most effective ways of controlling the wildlife reservoir of the disease."*

*"With the advent of oral vaccines, this approach could be significantly cheaper too. This programme will show how badgers vaccination can be deployed over a large area, and will pave the way for more widespread use of vaccination as an effective alternative to culling."*

*"We're in a unique position as a major landowner to help find a solution to the blight of bovine TB that costs millions and affects farmers' livelihoods. We recognise that both cattle to cattle transmission of bovine TB as well as badgers infecting cattle need to be tackled."*

Over a decade ago the NT supported the Krebs Trials to investigate whether culling badgers would help tackle bovine TB. Evidence from this study showed that a cull could reduce TB in cattle in the same area.

However, the research also showed that there was an increased risk of bovine TB associated with land bordering on cull areas. This was attributed to 'perturbation', in which culling disrupts the social structure of badgers and the surviving individuals on the periphery of the cull area widely come into contact with cattle and badgers, spreading bovine TB.

There are relatively few places in the UK where the challenging criteria for an effective cull and especially avoiding 'perturbation' can be met. Developing the ability to vaccinate badgers and cattle is therefore vital for the eradication of bovine TB in the long term.

Eighteen tenant farmers are involved in the vaccination programme, which began in May.

The programme will last until 2015 and covers an area of 20 square kilometres on the Trust's Killerton estate, in the heart of cattle rearing country, in Devon. It is also one of the real hotspots for bovine TB in the county.

The administration of the vaccine to the badgers is being carried out by trained and licensed experts from the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA). The programme will cost £80,000 each year.

Badgers will be caught in live traps, without being harmed, injected with the vaccine and then marked so that they are not given the vaccine twice during a trapping operation.

As the Killerton Trial goes ahead, meanwhile, farmers are awaiting a decision by the Minister about the culling of badgers as part of a package of measures to stem the spread of bovine tuberculosis.

Defra keeps stressing that the delay in making an announcement is about making sure of the legal status of any cull, as a legal challenge by animal welfare groups seems inevitable if a cull is allowed.

Even in Wales where culling trials were due to go ahead, there is reluctance to proceed with a badger cull.

Following the Assembly Elections in May, which returned Labour as the majority party in a coalition Government, Welsh Environment Minister, John Griffiths, has now commissioned a review of the scientific evidence base regarding the eradication of bovine TB in Wales. There will be no cull of badgers in the Intensive Action Area while the review is being carried out, the results of which are due to be published in the autumn.

**'Whilst a vaccine for cattle is someway off, and there are wider regulatory issues making this difficult, giving the badgers a vaccine to stop the spread of bovine TB is a practical way forward and the recent evidence is that it works and is effective.'**

## Update on Defra's Farming Link News

### Farmers switch on to SPS online

Double the number of farmers and agents in England have already turned to RPA's SPS Online service to apply for the Single Payment Scheme in 2011 than in the previous year.

Overall numbers of electronic applications from farmers using SPS Online and other farm software packages have also increased by more than 90%.

By the 16 May deadline, the Rural Payments Agency had received **30,850** electronic applications for SPS 2011, an increase of more than 90% from 2010 when the figure was 16,054. Half of these applications have come in from farmers and agents who are using the online and farm software services for the first time.

The number of farmers using RPA's own SPS Online service up to the 16 May deadline has doubled – from 13,279 in 2010 to **27,081** in 2011.

At the beginning of June, the total number of applications received so far is around 105,000 which means that about a third have been electronic applications.

RPA's online service highlights common errors so they can be corrected before the application is submitted which reduces the number of errors. Farmers and agents also get an instant receipt so they know it has arrived at RPA. The final cut-off date for this year's applications was 10 June.

### Entry Level Stewardship/Organic ELS agreements

Natural England will look favourably on requests for derogations to agreements where grassland management has been affected by the dry weather or there is a need to carry out supplementary feeding of livestock. ELS/OELS agreement holders should liaise with their agent, agronomist or farm consultant and use the standard proforma: (95kb) to request derogations. Further guidance can be found in the ELS scheme handbook or the OELS scheme handbook.

Any ELS/OELS agreement holders who need further information or assistance can call Natural England on 0300 060 0011.



Coombe Valley

© Roger Hosking

### Advice on derogations for Environmental Stewardship agreements from Natural England

To help farmers and growers cope with the intense spell of dry weather, Natural England is ensuring that appropriate Environmental Stewardship derogations are made available to farmers who are in agri-environment schemes (AES); and issued advice on 2 June about how they can apply for them.

#### Higher Level Stewardship agreements

As each HLS agreement is tailored to individual circumstances, HLS agreement holders should contact their local Natural England advisor if they need assistance with an HLS derogation relating to farming activity, such as carrying out early hay cutting or a need to provide supplementary feeding for livestock due to poor grass growth.

### RDPE Latest news

From 1 July, responsibility for the delivery of support for farming and forestry competitiveness, diversification of the rural economy and rural quality of life under Axis 1 and 3 of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and for management of community-led Leader approach, will transfer from the eight existing Regional Development Agencies to DEFRA. Many of those who have been involved in the Programme so far are moving to Defra and will continue to be the first point for contact for enquiries.

Information on delivery of the RDPE Programme is available at [www.rdpenetwork.org.uk](http://www.rdpenetwork.org.uk) This site will be updated as further information becomes available.



An event for producers within a 30 mile radius of Totnes and for processors, restauranteurs and retailers within the town was organised for 30 June.

The two main purposes of this event were to explore opportunities for expanding the sourcing of local food around Totnes and to overcome some of the barriers and bottlenecks that restrict the availability of local food.

The key findings of the recently released CPRE report were discussed, and the follow-on role of the Food-Link project in encouraging the growth of the local food economy in the town was unveiled. To access the CPRE report *Mapping Local Food Webs from Field to Fork* follow the link at: <http://e-activist.com/ea-action/action?ea.client.id=21&ea.campaign.id=8285>

The Break-out sessions examined the following issues:

1. distribution issues for producers
2. issues with sourcing local produce for retailers, restauranteurs
3. promoting locally-sourced produce
4. information required by producers from their buyers to ensure that their produce has a local end-market
5. opportunities for processing infrastructure in Totnes to enable further expansion of local produce
6. the potential for a wholesale version of a Food Hub

Anyone interested in attending future events should contact Holly Tiffen on Mobile 07850 407 107. She is also available on Tuesdays and Wednesdays on Tel 05601 538658; and on email: [holly@transitiontowntotnes.org](mailto:holly@transitiontowntotnes.org)

Considering the financial pressure everyone seems to be going through at the moment because of a combination of central government cuts, local unemployment and consumer caution, local retailers report their sales are down. Now is the time to support local shops, pubs and restaurants before they are forced to close.

### Bluetongue Restrictions Lifted

Restrictions on exporting sheep and cattle from Great Britain in place because of bluetongue disease will be lifted on 5 July 2011. The restrictions were imposed in 2007, following the first cases of bluetongue in Great Britain.

Bluetongue-free status will mean that animals exported from Great Britain to bluetongue free countries, mainly the Republic of Ireland, won't require vaccination, or meet any other bluetongue requirements.

The disease is not currently found in Britain's neighbouring countries, and animals entering Great Britain from bluetongue zones will continue to meet stringent import conditions. The testing of imported animals from high risk countries will be maintained.

Once Great Britain is declared bluetongue free on 5 July, livestock keepers will no longer be able to vaccinate under EU law. The Government is pressing for changes to be made at European level to allow farmers to use vaccination even when bluetongue zones aren't in place.

Bluetongue Free status will take effect from 5 July 2011, so any farmers wishing to vaccinate should do so before this date.

The last case of bluetongue in Great Britain was in 2008 and the UK has demonstrated to the European Commission that no cases have been reported for the last two years.

Bluetongue affects all ruminants, including sheep, cattle, deer, goats and camelids. It is spread by certain types of biting midges, and causes reduced milk yields, abortions, deaths and reduced fertility.

The first case in Britain was found in September 2007, with midges thought to have been blown over from the Continent. There have been no reports of active bluetongue in Northern EU Member States, with Hungary, Denmark and Sweden have all declared disease freedom, and other countries expecting to follow later this year.

The Bluetongue Directive doesn't allow animals to be vaccinated unless a bluetongue zone is in place. The Government is pressing the Commission to change this so vaccination can be used more flexibly. In the meantime, a close watch for new outbreaks is being kept and if there were a greater risk of Bluetongue (for instance if it were found again in parts of the Continent close to the coast), then the UK could declare a Low Risk Zone again to enable livestock keepers to vaccinate.



## News roundup

### Go ahead for West Country Rural Broadband

Devon and Somerset County Councils, supported by district councils, have been successful in their bid for super fast broadband. It means that 85 % of Devon and Somerset will have access to super-fast broadband by 2015 and 100 % by 2020.

As a result of the successful bid, the project will receive £30 million; and it will be coordinated by a joint team from Devon and Somerset local authorities.

The Devon and Somerset super-fast broadband project is designed to cover Dartmoor and Exmoor farming businesses, as well as the broader rural business community.

At the moment 90% of businesses believe poor connectivity is undermining their ability to function and develop. Currently it is estimated, however, that 836,000 businesses and residents from Plymouth to Western-super-Mare will benefit from super-fast broadband, creating a more level playing field with those in urban areas.

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### New West Country Local Enterprise Partnership

Following last year's General Election, which led to the formation of a coalition government, the Government's proposals for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) were first set out in a letter sent by Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills, and Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, to councils and business leaders across the country.

Local enterprise partnerships are led by local authorities and businesses across natural economic areas. It is hoped they will provide the vision, knowledge and strategic leadership needed to drive sustainable private sector growth and job creation in their area. LEPs will take over much of the functions of the former Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), which have been disbanded.

The Government received a total of 62 LEP proposals, 34 of which were approved in the *Local Growth White Paper*.

The approved LEPs cover 96 per cent of the population, 1.9 million businesses and 22 million employees.

The boundaries in the LEPs map are those that have been agreed by Ministers based on the proposals submitted by the partnerships, which were assessed using the criteria set out in the *Local Growth White Paper*. If a Partnership wishes to change these boundaries then they will need to demonstrate to Ministers that the new boundaries still meet the criteria.

## News roundup

In the South West, the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was approved and formed in April under the leadership of the private sector supported by the local authorities from Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay to create a powerful economic alliance. Its objectives are to create new jobs, raise productivity levels and increase average wages.

With a diverse economy, the South West has many strengths, including: outstanding expertise in low carbon energy generation (notably nuclear power and renewables), the defence sector, marine and maritime industries. It has an exceptional landscape and coastline, including two National Parks, providing an unrivalled tourism experience and quality of life.

It also has two world class universities and excellent further education colleges helping to provide a skilled workforce and a growing knowledge base. For example, the area has the highest concentration of climate change and environmental researchers and experts in Europe. Small and micro businesses make up a significant part of the business sector and demonstrate the depth of the entrepreneurial activity in the region.

The economy does face a number of challenges however, in terms of lower than average wages, productivity levels and distance from market.

The geography of the region increases its reliance on critical infrastructure and key services. Overcoming significant transport and logistic issues, as well as planning constraints is vital for businesses to thrive and attract new investment. Accelerating the roll out of super-fast broadband is crucial to the future economic success of the region. There is also a high dependence on the public sector for employment so there is a very real need for the LEP to address the rebalancing of the West Country's economy.

The Heart of the South West LEP has just recruited its board members. More details of appointees and the strategic agenda can be found on the website at: <http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/>

The first main board meeting will take place in July, and in the meantime the LEP has been actively looking at Enterprise Zones. There were five applications and the two successful bids will then be put forward by the LEP.

Recently, the Devon Farming and Food Board was informed that there will be opportunities to inform and influence the main board's agenda, especially important for the farming and food sectors since they are a significant segment of the economy.

## News roundup

### Difficulties in obtaining HLS

Those of you living in the West Country may have read recently about the case of a farming couple in Cornwall who had problems having their Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) application approved. In spite of having received approval by the Natural England office in Truro, the application was rejected by Head Office in Newcastle on the grounds that it had not been approved by the deadline of 1 June.

Undaunted, however, the couple informed Natural England that they would be appealing directly to the Minister at the Royal Cornwall Show the following day. Miraculously, the application was approved by the following morning!

This is not the only instance relating to HLS application difficulties of which the Small Farms is aware. Our own President applied recently and experienced problems in spite of soliciting help with the application from FWAG, which has a very high rate of success.

This is a highly competitive scheme; and although the funding for HLS was ring-fenced in the Government's strategic spending review last year, there is a lot of competition for the scheme. We must remember that Defra has an overall cut of 29% in its budget; and HLS is a victim of its own success.

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group's Managing Director, Andy Ormiston, has been quoted as saying: "HLS is the jewel in the crown of environmentally sustainable farming across Europe. It is the most important tool that we have to help and encourage farmers to look after England's countryside - not only wildlife, but the vital natural resources of soil and water, our landscapes and historic features.

We are pleased that Caroline Spelman and her team have taken the long term view of supporting this valuable asset in what is, after all, the International Year of Biodiversity".

FWAG continues to work with farmers, other national Government offices and the slimmed down agencies to find creative ways of delivering more and greater environmental gain with fewer resources."

Small Farms is advising members who are thinking of applying for HLS to contact their local FWAG office and seek help through the advisory service. The FWAG website can be found at: [www.fwag.org.uk](http://www.fwag.org.uk)

## News roundup



Zwarbles grazing at Killerton

©Julia Proctor

### Brussels talks to try to resolve EID issues

UK agriculture ministers met with EU Commissioner John Dalli in Brussels in June to discuss the issue of EID system.

This is the latest in a series of ongoing talks in which the UK has raised concerns over the difficulties for British farmers around the new EID system, particularly in achieving 100 per cent accuracy in the electronic reading of all sheep movements to avoid penalties to their Single Payments under the Common Agricultural Policy.

UK agriculture minister, Jim Paice, and Scotland's Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead, had a constructive discussion with Commissioner Dalli, where they explained the distinctive nature of the sheep industry in all parts of the UK, the challenges it faces and the need to accept that some electronic identification reading error will occur.

They stressed their determination to deliver a system which provides traceability, but because of the frequency and volume of sheep movements in the UK, the need for flexibility is imperative that recognises that delivering 100 per cent read rates is not always achievable.

Defra reported the discussion was constructive and confirmed the Minister will continue to pursue this issue until a workable solution is found.

The Ministers and Commissioner agreed that the most important aim of the scheme was robust traceability.

A number of ideas were discussed; and the UK will put a further proposal to the Commission that reflects the circumstances of different parts of the UK.



## **The voice of the small farmer**

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**We're on the Web!**  
**[www.small-farms-association.org](http://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.

## Members' Adverts and notices

### **G H W Rosevear & Co**

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### **Small Farms Hon Treasurer**

Our members may not know that our Hon. Treasurer, George Rosevear, is a qualified Accountant, Tax Advisor and Company Secretary, and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the organisation.

George's practice, **G H W Rosevear & Co**, was established in the South Hams in 1993, and operates from offices in Modbury where he is ideally placed to provide Accountancy, Taxation, Business Development, Inheritance Planning and Company Secretarial services throughout the South Hams and beyond.

The practice provides a personal service to its clients and George brings many years of experience in corporate affairs, including retailing, manufacturing, construction, farming and property management company work to the practice.

As well as Annual Accounts for both unincorporated and incorporated businesses, the practice offers a management accounts service, either monthly or quarterly; and VAT and Payroll services are also offered. Client's work is accepted in either day book, spread sheet or computer based formats.

With the advent of filing accounts on line, George provides this service, especially for those who may be computer shy! He can be contacted on Tel: 01548-831427.

**Phillip Hosking**

### **FOR SALE**

Two corrugated galvanised iron pig arks (no floors). May need some tidying. £60 each or £100 the pair. Collection from Loddiswell area or might be able to deliver locally. Please call Carole on: 07801 533347.