



The Farm Consultancy Group

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Welcome to our 83rd edition of the newsletter. Included in this months newsletter are articles on secretarial services, mycotoxins, business protocols, mapping updates, planning ahead, farm deeds, staff management, cow health and commodities updates. Your feedback and comments are most welcome. If clarification is required, please contact the article contributor or for more articles and news visit www.fcgagric.com.

Edited by Gerard Finnan of David Bardgett Ltd and The Farm Consultancy Group Tel: 07976 426420.

More than Just a Secretarial Service - Gerard Finnan

Our two mobile farm secretaries provide more than just a basic secretarial service. I would describe the service provided as a business administration role covering;

- BPS
- Grant Applications
- Computerised VAT and Management Accounts
- Payroll Administration
- Recording, Tracking, Invoicing
- Stock Control
- BCMS Administration
- Farm Assurance Records



Our staff use different software packages, recording systems, spreadsheets etc. The service doesn't have to be used on an ongoing basis. Short term help may only be required to keep on top of things. Some advice may be needed on setting up office systems for example. You may need a substitute while on holiday or having an operation for a short time.

For highly skilled professionals who can take the burden off your shoulders, long term or short term, call Rachel Reed on 07980 294816.

Mycotoxins - Andrew Jones

Inside this issue:

Business Protocols	2
Mapping Updates	2
Planning Ahead	2
Farm Deeds	3
Staff Management	3
Cow Health	4
Commodities Update	4

Just be aware to look out for mycotoxins, i.e. moulds, on your silages again as we come into autumn and are following on from a period of wet and moist weather.



I was at a client's farm earlier in the week and we were discussing the fact that the cows were down a little bit on expected production. A quick look at the maize clamp saw an increase in mould on the face compared with last month, as was the case this time last year, so a binder has been ordered which should see production return to its previous levels, as it did last year (+1-2 Litres/cow) .

There is always going to be limited spoilage/mould on a silage face no matter how good your clamp management, just usually you can't see it. However, once you can and maybe the cows drop production, or see an increase in lameness or SCC (the three most common symptoms) then a binder must be worth considering. The solution is normally simple and very cost effective.

For more information on mycotoxins and available binders, contact Andrew Jones on 07717 442888.

A copy of this newsletter can be downloaded from our website @ www.davidbardgett.co.uk



Who Knows What? – Phil Cooper



As some of you may be aware, I have had an extended period of time off work due to a neck injury. This has meant colleagues covering for me whilst being away and making use of insurances to pay for additional labour. It made me think, when we were asked for our monthly management tips, how would our clients cope if this happened. So, there's the question; how would you cope?

Imagine you suffered an illness or injury and had to spend a prolonged period in hospital or away from work. Could the remaining staff cope? Could you afford to pay for additional labour to come in and cover the work you normally do? Do the rest of the team know what to do, when to do it, or is it all in your head?

If nothing else, this period of time off has highlighted that it is so important to ensure that all team members know what's going on, and are able to access data for clients and understand what clients require. The same is true on farm. Do you have protocols for calf rearing, silage making, drying off, breeding, reseeding, etc., so that someone new coming to the farm can pick up how things are done easily and quickly?

LEAN farming, which I have mentioned before, has its principles underpinned with protocols so that the task is carried out the same no matter which team member is completing it.

The key to managing the risk in this situation is to have protocols for all operations on the farm, have a simple system and carry key man insurance. Could you say this is true of your business?

If it's not, contact Phil Cooper on 07798 673665, to discuss how you can reduce the risk to your business.

Mapping Updates - Rachel Reed

The Rural Payments Agency is making a number of updates to digital maps, which started in July and will continue into the autumn. These will be visible on your Rural Payments land data on the RPA website.

From August, the RPA are sending notifications through the service to let customers know when mapping updates have been published (except those that the customers have already told the RPA about). If you receive a notification and you don't agree with the updates, an RLE1 form will need to be completed and returned to the RPA together with a sketch map showing the correction. Correcting any errors now will reduce the amount of time required to complete the BPS next spring.

Contact Sophie Cahill or Rachel Reed on 01935 850093, who can help you with these mapping changes.

Have you Planned Ahead? – Phil Cooper

We recently visited a new farm business who were looking at how they manage the future in terms of succession, to ensure that all siblings are kept happy. This is always a difficult discussion as there can be many different points of view, objectives and expectations. The sibling who stays at home and helps run the farm may expect to inherit the business, siblings who have moved away may have an expectation that the assets will be sold and cash divided up. Finding a fair outcome to this is not easy.

The key is to remember that fair does not necessarily mean equal. It can be, but it doesn't have to be. The next thing to remember is to plan early as this can have significant tax advantages as well as ensuring all parties involved know what your wishes are. Make sure these wishes are clearly written down as part of your wills. Finally make sure you communicate. This is essential so that all parties involved understand your wishes for the future. We have been involved in a number of family meetings where we have chaired discussions with all parties to ensure that the parents' wishes are understood and that each party can see that they are being treated fairly.

I appreciate this is not the nicest of subjects to discuss and is probably one of the hardest. It needs to be done, otherwise your wishes may not be enacted in the future and in the worst cases, the business and farm may end up being sold off to pay tax or settle court arguments over inheritance.

If you would like help in planning the future and in communicating this to the rest of the family, then contact Phil Cooper on 07798 673665.



Do You Know the Whereabouts of the Deeds to Your Farm? - Rachel Reed

HM Land Registry



Traditionally the deeds to land have been held by the banks or mortgage lenders as security against borrowing. Once the borrowing is paid off, the deeds are often left at the bank for safekeeping or used for further security, or they may be held in safekeeping by professional firms.

If your local branch has closed or your solicitor firm merged, where are the deeds to your farm now kept? If the property is registered, the Land Registry can quickly obtain copies of ownership deeds if they are lost, mislaid or destroyed by fire.

The problem arises if the land was not used for security, or the borrowing paid off a long time ago and the deeds 'cannot be found' by those entrusted when needed for a land sale, transfer or first registration with the Land Registry. Legal support may help trace them at central security centres.

If the deeds cannot be found, the Land Registry may be able to grant a *possessory title* based on other documentary evidence. After 12 years, if the ownership is unchallenged, the Land Registry will update it to an *absolute title*. If however, someone else challenges the claim, the ownership could be lost to, or split with, another claimant.

Deeds often contain a full history and old maps of the land, not just ownership, so maybe it is time to track them down for when you need them next.

Staff Management – Gerard Finnan

Like many farmers, your business has successfully grown and you want the choice to do less, especially physical work. Maybe you are becoming more reliant on employed staff. How you recruit and manage these people will be the key to your future business success.

Managing people is a skill you probably have learnt through trial and error. You base your knowledge on experiences, especially if you were fortunate to have been given the time as a youngster to have worked off farm for other people. It isn't easy, it's dealing with people and it is easy to avoid learning or changing any aspects of people management formally.

How and what you communicate to your staff is crucial in the success of your business in future. When it was just you and your family, you worked telepathically. If you try to operate the same way with employed staff, you won't have staff for very long.

The agricultural industry has a poor record of recruiting staff and work conditions and pay are always cited as the reasons. I answer this by saying that some farm businesses have waiting lists of potential new employees, whilst other businesses struggle to get anyone to work for them. Surely this is the farmer and not the industry at fault. If that farmer hasn't the skills and doesn't want to change, he may be better reducing workload and doing most of work himself or investing in robots and technology to replace humans.



So when it comes to expansion of your business, your skills to manage more people should be the priority before considering buildings, land, livestock and finance. More farming businesses are moving towards managing people to manage their livestock or crops or diversified business – as opposed to them directly managing themselves.

Are you working harder with more staff? Are you struggling to delegate effectively? If yes, then contact Gerard Finnan on 07976 426420, to see how our management expertise can help you manage your team more effectively to achieve your business objectives.



Cow Health – Phil Cooper

A Kingshay report published in July identified the following trends:

Cases/100 Cows	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Mastitis	58	50	49	49	41
Lameness	46	44	45	45	43

The figures show that there has been a 17% improvement in mastitis and no real improvement in lameness. The average herd still has over 40% of cows lame! This feels really disappointing. With the excellent data available, new drugs and good advice from vets and other professionals, we should be seeing more improvements. The top 25% of herds have only 22 cases of mastitis per 100 cows, half that of the average.

The results show that there is clearly room for improvement. Reducing lameness and mastitis not only improves cow health, it also improves profits. Healthier cows produce more milk, get in calf quicker, require fewer drugs and cause less problems and use less vet and farm staff labour.

Do you know your key performance indicators for these two areas? If not work it out and then set targets to reduce them. As my colleagues always says, "if you don't measure it, you can't manage it". If you are not sure how, ask your vet or milk record provider to help you.

Start focusing on improving these basic areas now and improve your profits and lifestyle. To discuss further, contact Phil Cooper on 07798 673665.

Commodities Update (06/09/17) - Andrew Jones

As I write this update, the harvest for 2017 seems to be concluded and I'm told a lot of wheat failed to meet milling grade, which will mean more feed wheat available. The pound has weakened against the euro this last month and fluctuated against the dollar, but rate overall is unchanged in August. The latest Global Dairy auctions saw an overall gain of +0.3%.

Milk Powder - price has increased this month as predicted, by 3% because of increased milk prices and a weaker pound.

Feed - Soya has fluctuated in a narrow price range. Rape looks more attractive for the short term but is still expensive moving forward. Cereals could be heading down due to the failure of milling wheat to make the grade.

Fertiliser - The last month has seen CF (Nitram etc.) close prices again followed by an increase a few days later of £10/t. The increase in Nitram was quickly followed by an increase in Urea prices and this trend of price increases is expected to continue through the coming winter.

Other fertiliser prices have been static over the last few months but the talk in the trade is a slow increase in price for the likes of MOP & DAP.

If you are thinking of purchasing any P & K for the autumn, now might be the time to call Andrew Jones on 07717 442888 and book ahead of any price rise.



FCG Sherborne Office:

Tel/Fax: 01935 850093

Email:
midwest@fcgagric.com

4 Trent Court
Trent, Sherborne
Dorset, DT9 4SL

