



The Farm Consultancy Group

Issue 85 -
November
2017



Welcome to our 85th edition of the newsletter. Included in this months newsletter are articles on the Farmers Weekly dairy farmer of the year, new staff, RPA land changes, Rumiplus, tray testing, winter minerals, beef and sheep after Brexit, business rates 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.

Farmers Weekly Dairy Farmer of the Year - Neville & Sue Loder

Congratulations to Neville & Sue Loder who were awarded the coveted Farmers Weekly Dairy Farmer of the Year 2017. The Loders have been a Farm Consultancy Group client since they started farming 17 years ago, initially with the help of Caroline Taylor and in the last 12 years from Gerard Finnan.

The Loders have changed and adapted their dairy farming system over the years from very humble beginnings. The secret to their success has been a combination of teamwork, tenacity, taking calculated and informed risks, learning from their peers through discussion groups, simplifying their business and a focus on clear objectives to generate profits to secure their futures. They still budget and plan their business future today like they did when they started farming.

Neville commented 'Investing in the consultancy service from The Farm Consultancy Group has enabled us to take control of our business by helping us forward plan and budget. They filled some of the skills we were lacking in our business. They have given us confidence in our decision making, which meant we have taken bigger and bolder decisions, which has speeded up our business growth with minimal risk. Having Gerard at the end of the phone to share a problem and provide constructive practical solutions is important to us'.

Gerard commented that 'It is very fitting that a dairy farm of national average output, that was started up 17 years ago has won this award in a year of rock bottom milk prices, (to March 2017).

Inside this issue:

New Staff	2
RPA Land Changes	2
Rumiplus	2
Tray Testing	3
Winter Minerals	3
Brexit - Beef & Sheep	3
Business Rates	4
Commodities Update	4



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



New Staff - Andrew Jones

At a recent AHDB Dairy event held in Dorset, the New Zealand speaker, who was there to talk about lane-ways & lameness gave an interesting little tip regarding the starting of new staff on a farm.

It has been proven that cows remember their interactions with different people and so the first interaction they have with a new member of staff should always be positive, so that they remember this and future interactions with that member of staff will also go well.

So, don't keep the TB testing or vaccinations for when the new staff member starts. Do it before or after a few weeks, so the cows remember the positive and not the negative.

Another practical suggestion with a new herdsman; is there any point them stumbling around in the dark on their first morning as they try to learn the new dairy etc.? Why not start them after breakfast? This way, it's less stressful for everyone including the cows. Let them get to know the parlour and yards in the light before their first morning milking.

On any practical solutions to farm staffing problems, contact Andrew Jones on 07717 442888. We can sub contract dairy staff through our labour company without you having to pay holidays, pension or National Insurance costs. You just need to find the staff!

RPA Land Changes - Sophie Cahill

The Rural Payments Agency has been making a lot of mapping changes over the last few months. To find out whether any changes have been made to your land, log into your RPA online account. The first page you should see will show whether you have any new messages. If you do have the red new message showing, then click into this, and a list of field parcels that have been changed will show. Make a note of these field parcels and then go to 'Land', then 'View Land'. This will bring up all the field parcels registered to your business. From here you can go into the field parcels that have been changed and check the details held for these fields. It may be that the RPA have made correct changes to your field parcels, in which case you need do no more. However, if any of the changes are wrong, you will need to contact the RPA via the correct route. If there are incorrect changes then it is likely that an RLE1 will need to be completed. It would be prudent to make sure this is done as soon as possible, so that all corrections are made before it comes to applying for your Basic Payment in 2018. This will ensure that the 2018 application process is much more efficient and subsequently, your payment in 2018 is more likely to be received on time.

For further details or guidance, please contact Sophie Cahill on 07496 587011.



Rumiplus - Andrew Jones

With the great growing season we've had this last year, it means that grass silage could potentially be lacking in fibre and with straw prices carrying a premium this year, is it time to look for an alternative source of fibre?

Rumiplus is the new name for a product previously known as Rumiluz. It is high temperature dried lucerne that is chopped to provide scratch factor and structure to a diet without reducing the nutrient density and has a natural buffering effect on the cow's rumen. It has also been shown to increase dry matter intake and lifetime milk yields.



Being lucerne the product naturally has a higher protein content than straw, (18% compared with 4%) and so can reduce your concentrate cost. It is a good mix of both RDP & DUP.

It also has other indirect benefits by being naturally high in Biotin, which can improve hoof quality and SCC, and increased levels of Beta-carotene which have been shown to improved conception rates.

Rumiplus is delivered in 1t bales, with a minimum delivery of half an artic load. Contact Andrew Jones on 07717 442888, for a price delivered to your farm.



Tray Testing - Phil Cooper

When was the last time you checked the spread pattern on your fertiliser spinner? If it was more than 12 months ago, then you are probably losing money from uneven spreading of fertiliser. Current survey results from the British Survey of Fertiliser Practice, suggest that only 35%-40% of farmers check their spreader annually and worryingly, 30% never report testing their spreader.

You should test your spinner's spread pattern every year as a minimum and really every time you change the type of fertiliser you are using, e.g. Urea to AN. There is an increasing move to asking contractors to spread your fertiliser. Have you asked them if they check their machine spread pattern?



For a crop of wheat an uneven spread pattern could be costing you £20 per hectare in lost yield. To tray test your spreader, costs around £250 per annum. You could be spreading £25,000 worth of fertiliser on a 125 ha farm annually. It's a no-brainer really. To find your local tester look on www.nsts.org.uk

If you would like to discuss fertiliser management and plans further, please contact Phil Cooper on 07798 673665.

Winter Minerals - Andrew Jones

Have you sorted your winter minerals yet? If not, be aware that mineral prices have risen rapidly in recent weeks, with Biotin doubling in price as an example of this.

At David Bardgett Ltd, we have our own range of standard minerals where we have managed to keep prices down at this stage, but this might change soon.

Vitfoss

If you would like a bespoke mineral for your herd, we can help with this too. Either send us a picture of your current mineral label to price, or let us come and take samples of the forage and other diet ingredients alongside the water used on the farm.

With this information, our mineral supplier can make the correct bespoke mineral for your farm that is unique to your needs. If you use a bespoke mineral, you should ideally look at the mineral needs of your farm every three or four years.

If you would like details and the specifications of the standard minerals we have available, or would like a bespoke mineral priced, please contact Andrew Jones on 07717 442888 for more information.

Brexit Beef & Sheep - Gerard Finnan

Non-dairy livestock farmers are more dependent on subsidies to make up more of their incomes (60%+ on average)! Subsidies won't disappear but will evolve in future with more direct accountability for payments made e.g. welfare and environmental being two areas highlighted.

There are five areas that will increase incomes to subsidise your BPS:

- Buy a weigh cell for a cattle crush and measure growth rates regularly.
- Rotationally graze grass (3 days grazing/3 weeks growing).
- Soil test your land and act on results.
- Source/breed genetically proven livestock.
- Increase/modify housing ventilation.



All above may cost 1-2 year's BPS to implement, but will pay you back your BPS year after year without the dependence on a payment each December! If you continue receiving the BPS in whatever form, it will be a bonus.

The average beef farmer utilises 60% of the grass per Ha that the average dairy farmer does. This is equivalent to 2-3t DM/Ha extra utilised, or £250/ha extra profit (£25k for 100 ha). This is after any extra investment costs. If interested in taking your fate in your own control rather than depending on the vagaries of politics, then contact Gerard Finnan today on 07976 426420.



Business Rates – Rachel Reed

Are you liable to pay business rates on your 'farm' buildings?

The government is planning to significantly reduce or remove all financial support for local government by 2019/2020, therefore local councils are looking to raise the money themselves through efficiencies and business rates in their area.

There are a number of areas local councils are looking at; DIY livery stables, sheds rented out for storage of cars, storage for a third party, and basically any use that is not agriculture use by the farm. Farm contractors using a farm building for machinery storage is a grey area, but especially vulnerable if they carry out civil engineering work or construction as well as farm contracting, if machinery is repaired on the farm etc.



The council have the powers to backdate the rateable value for 5 years, but as revaluations are taking place in 2017, this is the earliest year they can go back to now.

Land that is used for livery may require change of use as it is no longer classed as agricultural land, and any stabling on the land may need planning permission if it is not moveable, (i.e. it has a concrete base and water/electric to it).

Another thing to consider is: Land in agricultural use benefits from agricultural property relief; Land in equestrian use does not (with one exception – stud farms). If there is a possibility for development use in the future, this could have a significant impact on the amount of tax to pay.

Speak with your accountant to discuss the future tax implications of existing or proposed diversifications on your farm.

Commodities Update (05/11/17) - Andrew Jones

Over the last month the pound has fluctuated against the dollar and euro with no short term change due to the 0.25% interest rate increase, as it was already factored into rates a month ago.

The latest Global Dairy auction fell by 1.0%, following the previous drop of 2.4%. Anhydrous Milk Fat was the only product to increase by 5.2%.

Milk Powder- fell by 1.6% this month due to the decrease in commodity prices.

Feed - Prices over the last month have seen very small changes. Cereals are still much higher than expected. Soya hulls and sugar beet pulp are available, but expensive, and forward Rape prices look high relative to alternatives.

Fertiliser- There is uncertainty in the Nitrogen market. Nitram prices increased by a further £5/T and Urea prices are currently in the mid to late £280's. Importers are not looking to import any more Urea until prices decrease, which may be too late for next spring.

Contact Andrew Jones on 07717 442888 for an up to date quotation.



FCG Sherborne Office:

Tel/Fax: 01935 850093

Email:

midwest@fcgagric.com

4 Trent Court
Trent, Sherborne
Dorset, DT9 4SL

