



The Farm Consultancy Group

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David  
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For All Round Business Success



Welcome to our 90th edition of the newsletter. Included in this months newsletter are articles on spring grazing, BPS 2018 applications, vitamins and minerals, severe spring weather planning, milk lactose levels, buying groups, new data protection regulations, land values, Fresh Start initiative 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](http://www.fcgagric.com).

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

## Late Spring? - Gerard Finnan

After a challenging spring weather wise with hopefully better weather ahead, are you prepared to turn out cattle to grass? Because grass growth has been delayed or you are later getting fertiliser applied, doesn't mean cattle cannot go out once the weather warms up. Farmers more often admit that in hindsight, cattle could have been turned out earlier when Mother Nature compensates in later spring for a slow start.

With exorbitant straw prices and quality silage stocks receding, you could be saving £1-£1.50/hd per day for each day cattle are out earlier. Grass quality benefits as lower covers grazed tighter result in better subsequent sward quality for silage or grazing. Cattle will also perform better the sooner they are grazing spring grass.

Don't allow a 'late weather spring' as an excuse for even later turnout than normal. Challenge your livestock growing costs. You will be pleasantly surprised what can be achieved, even in perceived adverse conditions.



Contact Gerard Finnan on 07976 426420 or [gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com](mailto:gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com) to help you recoup some of the extra costs this spring.

## Basic Payment Scheme 2018: - Don't Delay Starting Application! - Sophie Cahill

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A further reminder to look at your BPS 2018 application now! The 2018 Basic Payment Scheme application window is currently open, with a deadline of May 15<sup>th</sup>. Having already started working through client's 2018 claims, I have come across numerous problems with the remapping that has been done by the RPA since the 2017 applications were made. If you complete and submit your own claim, make sure you start sooner rather than later as the mapping changes are making it a much more time consuming exercise than it need be. I have come across many different types of mapping changes – fields being amalgamated, fields being split, ineligible features being removed, change of field boundaries, to name but a few. In many cases the mapping changes do not need to be changed but you must be sure that everything is as it should be prior to submitting your application.

For help with your 2018 BPS application, please contact Sophie Cahill at [sophiecahill@fcgagric.com](mailto:sophiecahill@fcgagric.com) or 07496 587011. Don't leave it too late to start this years' application!

**For Sale: BPS Non-SDA Entitlements.**

**Please contact Sophie Cahill on 07496 587011 if you are looking for entitlements as we have a number of clients with entitlements for sale.**



A copy of this newsletter can be downloaded from our website @ [www.davidbardgett.co.uk](http://www.davidbardgett.co.uk)



## Are Your Cows Getting the Right Vitamins & Minerals? - Andrew Jones

I've been hearing a few stories recently, during the current vitamin shortage and price rises, of some suppliers cutting levels; by 40% Vitamin A and by 25% Vitamin E (with replacement of Vitamin E with an antioxidant). Is that small cost saving in the grand scheme of things really a cost saving when you look at the effects it can have on your herd, and that prices are slowly beginning to ease?

Low Vitamin A levels can mean weak & irregular heats, abortions and early calvings, retained placentas, weak or stillborn calves, increased receptivity to infectious diseases and a general sub clinical suppression of the immune system.

If you have low Vitamin E levels it can result in muscle degeneration, reduced immunity, retained placentas, high SCC, poor reproduction, weak or stillborn calves or poor milk quality. While Vitamin E is an antioxidant, antioxidant alternatives can vary in quality and efficacy compared to Vitamin E.

Therefore, is it not better to pay a little more short term for peace of mind in avoiding larger long term problems?

**For minerals that are provided with the correctly specified levels of Vitamin A & E contact Andrew Jones on 07717 442888 or email [andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk](mailto:andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk)**

## Be Better Prepared Next Time? - Gerard Finnan

When a one in ten year spring weather event happens like this year, most of us are probably not best prepared. This applies to the whole agricultural industry. Farming coped really well, highlighting the resilience of farmers and staff, and their tenacity to look after their animals.

While experiences are fresh in your mind, it is a good time to briefly review with staff where procedures and plans could have been better. Maybe make some notes now to implement over the next six months. You cannot plan for every adversity. A bit more investment/time spent planning in certain areas in advance of the winter may have saved a lot of time when the weather was most severe. This spring has highlighted the weaknesses in your current farming system in light of coping with the severely low temperatures or excessively wet conditions. What are you going to do to alleviate this?

It may be getting extra insurance cover for potential losses, lagging pipes, providing more shelter on certain buildings to installing water pipes further underground in specific situations, extending your slurry storage capacity or budgeting winter forage stocks more carefully. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!

**Contact Gerard Finnan on 07976 426420 or email [gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com](mailto:gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com) to help put a plan in place for next winter.**

## Milk Lactose Levels- Andrew Jones

NML have now started testing your milk buyer samples for lactose levels. But what is Lactose and what is it an indication of?

Lactose is a disaccharide and is made up of one glucose molecule and one galactose molecule, indicating levels of sugar in milk, and energy available to the cow. Lactose is important for manufacturing processes. Low lactose levels can result in poorer product quality and therefore the potential down grading of product.

If you milk record there will be a record of all your cow's individual milk lactose results when you search their records online. The desired levels for an individual cow are 4.55% for a Holstein and 4.65% for a Jersey. If the levels are below this, it is an indication that the glucogenic or energy supply to the cow is insufficient. The glucogenic supply is directly available to the liver. So the higher the glucogenic supply the better the liver can drive milk production.

**Contact Andrew Jones on 07717 442888, or email [andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk](mailto:andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk) for help in interpreting your bulk or individual cow lactose milk results.**

# Buying Groups - Andrew Jones

Do you know, or realise, that as well as servicing customers in general David Bardgett Ltd runs a buying group that is open to anyone? We have members from Frome to Axminster and Shaftesbury to Taunton.



## What are the advantages of this buying group and how can it help your business?

- The main commodity traded is animal feed. The standard cakes supplied to group members are 12.8ME, which is a higher quality than the majority of cakes. Based on our current price list the group cakes will save you £50/cow or 0.75ppl on a like for like quality cake from an alternative supplier. We independently test the cake at regular intervals and act on your behalf to sort delivery or physical quality issues.
- I provide a full nutrition and feed advice back up and support if required with silage and soil analysis and dairy costings.
- Other recent buying successes for the group was a tender last year for over 300 tons of fertiliser, negotiating a deal for a discount on whole herd Johnes testing, ear tags, LN & arm service, dairy chemicals and the most recent tender for silage sheets. All offering discounts compared to buying on your own.
- We can make these price savings by buying in bulk, paying on time, looking around for the cheapest deal for you so saving you time and sending you only one monthly invoice with a breakdown of all the products and services supplied through the month.
- The opportunity to mix and exchange information and ideas with likeminded farmers, the odd social occasion and off farm visits. We have been invited to tour our ear tag supplier's factory later this year.

**Why not be like the six new members that have signed up already this year and contact Andrew on 07717 442888 or email [andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk](mailto:andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk) for more details about joining our buying group?**

## General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

All businesses have to comply with this from May 25<sup>th</sup> 2018!

This is the link which you may find useful to get you started looking at the requirements.

<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/>

# Land Values - Phil Cooper

The recent survey of land values, both rent and purchase, undertaken by RICS and RAU makes some interesting reading for both tenants and landlords, and buyers and sellers.



On the sales side the report gives two figures. The transaction based figures, based on actual land sold shows prices dropping with the average sitting at £10,257 per acre. The other figures are based on agent estimates of bare land values and this again is falling with the average at £7,434 per acre. The reason for the difference is the actual value will include an element of residential sales that come with the land and the estimate is for bare land only.

For FBT land both arable and grassland have seen drops, with arable land now averaging £141 per acre and grassland £94 per acre. The land rented under old style AHA tenancies actually saw increases in both sectors with arable now at £78 per acre and grassland £58 per acre. There is still however a clear gap between old and new tenancies, but this is closing.

So for tenants the news is generally positive with rents coming down on the modern form of tenancies, but if you are selling or a landlord then the potential returns from your investment are falling.

**If you are currently looking at a rent review and would like some help with establishing what the business can afford or if you are looking at buying land and want some help with finance, then please contact Phil Cooper on 07798 673665 or email [pcooper@fcgagric.com](mailto:pcooper@fcgagric.com)**

# Fresh Start - Phil Cooper

No this is not a new energy drink or breakfast cereal it is an initiative that has been set up to help put land owners who no longer want to actively farm together with farmers or new entrants who want to start farming. The aim is to act as a "dating agency" for both sides to bring them together in some form of joint venture, e.g. share farming, contract farming, tenancy, etc., see [www.freshstartlandenterprise.org.uk](http://www.freshstartlandenterprise.org.uk)

At a recent BIAC meeting I attended, Alison Rickett the managing director gave a presentation about Fresh Start and the achievements they have made to date. She showed a map of the number of farmers in England looking for a joint venture, which was quite encouraging.

The key with any joint venture is to be open and honest at the start as to what both parties expectations are, including level of commitment (labour and capital), expected income from the agreement, length of the agreement and where compromises can/cannot be made. After that it is essential to get the legal part right, i.e. what agreement are you going to use. Is it share farming, contract farming, tenancy or something else? Getting this right at the start will avoid problems down the line and gives a clear format for settling disputes and winding up the agreement.

**Fresh Start's main focus is creating sound business relationships, offering training and mentoring for potential joint ventures along with matching the right parties. They do not however get involved with setting up the agreements. This is where we can help as within the Farm Consultancy Group we have a wide range of experience in setting up and running various different joint ventures providing the legal documentation and the ongoing management to ensure both parties achieve their objectives.**

If you are interested in discussion a joint venture please contact Phil Cooper on 07798 673665 in the first instance to discuss further.



# Commodities Update - Andrew Jones

In the last month the pound has strengthened against the dollar and the euro by 1.5% and 2% respectively. The Global Dairy Trade auctions have been down, by -0.6% (06/03) & -1.2% (20/03). At the last auction the biggest loss was Skimmed Milk Powder (-8.6%), while the biggest increase was Whole Milk Powder (+0.1%).

**Milk Powder** - has remained static, from our supplier that treats it as a commodity, however another supplier has now caught up and dropped their prices by approximately £50/t from the beginning of the month.

**Feed** - Soya prices have weakened over the last month from £380/t, to currently £355/t, spot and £350/t for next winter. Rape prices are unchanged at £225/t spot and eased slightly for next winter at £205/t. Wheat and Barley prices are up slightly due to wet weather concerns over the lack of spring plantings.

**Fertiliser** - Urea & AN Prices are currently stable. There is limited imported AN in the market as shippers are reluctant to get left with expensive stock over the summer.

The current indications are that we will not see the big drops in AN that we did last year due to worldwide market conditions.

**Fertiliser suppliers have not done the expected business for this time of year. If there is a spike in market demand, immediate delivery will not be possible, and this will lead to increased prices (in the short term)! So, if you've still yet to make your spring purchases please give Andrew Jones a call on 07717 442888.**



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