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# Editorial

**One word has described the world commodity markets in the past few years – ‘volatile’. And they look set to remain volatile for the foreseeable future; just look at the current price of gold at \$1,500 per ounce, when 18 months ago the prospect of the gold price rising to over \$600 an ounce was unthinkable. Volatile markets are impacting on agriculture too and it is impossible to ignore the effects, whether your farming business is commodity based or aims at niche markets. So while arable growers are smiling at future prices in excess of £200 per tonne for their ‘gold’ grains of wheat and barley on commodity markets, the more ‘niche’ organic dairy farmers know that they will need a milk price of 35 – 38 ppl just to break even after projected rising costs.**

There are plenty of things to consider when trying to manage the impacts of this volatility on a farm or rural business; after all, one person’s price hike is another’s bank roll day. But the first question must be, why is this all happening? And the second question is, how long will it last? Well, wars and revolutions in eastern oil producing countries aside, the population of the world is growing fast and increasing affluence means that once poor people wish increasingly to lead a life based on a ‘western’ diet of processed milk and meat. This means that there are greater pulls on agricultural products and global production increases are lagging behind demand. The outcome is seen in sharp price

fluctuations in input costs and product values as supply and demand battle it all out. It looks like this situation will remain so for some considerable time to come. We can all argue the politics of these changes until the cows come home under a blue moon on a summer solstice – the reality is that farmers and rural people need to handle the consequences now and for the foreseeable future.

A little aside at this point. Professor John Bennington, chief advisor to the Westminster Government on all things science and agriculture, has talked about the ‘perfect storm’ in which a rising global population meets rising food demands meets problems with climate change. It seems that in recent times the great British public has lost some faith in its scientists, but hats off to Prof Bennington who perhaps can only be faulted for getting his timings wrong! The impact of these influences is not going to be in 20 or 30 years – the impact has started, here and now.

So, to the third question... If volatile markets are going to stay for at least the next few years, how can farm businesses change their practices to cope? Getting a higher price for your products is possible if you can shorten the

market chain and add value in niche markets, but we can’t all do this. For most farmers, the price they get for their products is largely out of their control, as is the price they pay for their inputs – lobbying by organisations like the NFU and CLA certainly helps and is necessary. But when more affluent populations in China and India want more milk products and their industry expands at such a rate that they need unprecedented quantities of phosphoric acid for stripping construction metals, and these facts underpin the skimmed milk market and push the price of some fertilisers through the roof, there’s not much that anyone on a relatively small island in the north west of Europe can do about it.

What we can do is look to how we are managing our farming systems and businesses and take control of what we can control. It’s an unpalatable message, but reducing the cost base of production on-farm is necessary in order to thrive and in many cases is needed just to survive.

This means that using resources more efficiently is vital. And this doesn’t just mean energy and feed resources, it means all resources, including animals, labour and machinery. For sure, lameness and mastitis in cattle



■ **Annette McDonald, Head of Skills, Innovation and Enterprise Solutions, Reaseheath College.**



can not be tolerated on grounds of animal health and welfare, but they should also not be tolerated on grounds of cost and resource use efficiency – ‘happy’ cattle produce more milk and meat and do it efficiently, ‘unhappy’ cattle don’t.

Farming is a busy job and it should not be a labour of love for minimal returns. But we must also help ourselves and that involves knowing in detail where our businesses are in all aspects – financial, physical and people – then setting goals of where we want to be and getting the skills and knowledge to achieve success. We hope that the following pages and publications of this newsletter will provide some support for choosing the road ahead and enjoying the journey. ■

## Industry Comments and Letters to the Editor – An Invitation

Welcome to the first RADA Newsletter. The aim of the newsletter is to provide useful technical and market information and insight for the farmers and rural businesses of Cheshire on a bimonthly basis. We will also be featuring different activities, demonstration events and skills training courses that are available, and we hope that these will be of interest to all involved with farming and rural businesses in the county.

You can send us your comments and opinions on any issues and we will print some of these in future issues. Contact us at:

■ RADA, Enterprise Delivery Hub,  
Reaseheath College, Nantwich,  
Cheshire, CW5 6DF.

■ Tel: 01270 613 195

■ Email: [hub@reaseheath.ac.uk](mailto:hub@reaseheath.ac.uk)

# Thinking about NVZs

**Our first industry comment comes from Andrew Nicholas at Harvey Hughes, who contacted us to express his concerns about the upcoming NVZ rule amendments that come into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012. Andrew emailed to say:**

‘One of the most common failures under cross compliance checks is the failure to comply with Nitrate Vulnerable Zones or NVZ’s (SMR4). In 2010 inspection rates and failures doubled when compared to 2009. These failures are likely to increase further if farmers do not take action to ensure sufficient slurry storage is in place by the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012.

Farmers must have prepared storage calculations to ensure they have sufficient storage during the closed periods which is 5 months October to February for cattle slurries and 6 months October to April for pig and poultry manures. If storage requirement has been identified farmers will need to investigate cost effective methods to see if capacity can be reduced by diverting clean and dirty water and separation of solids. Farmers don’t have much time to consider construction types, obtain planning permission, arrange building contractors, and obtain Environment Agency approval.’

Thanks to Andrew. In fact we were so interested in his views that we got him to expand on them in an article which you can read later in this edition.

Don’t forget to send in your opinions and thoughts (contact details below)... ■

## About RADA

**Our aim at the Reaseheath Agricultural Development Academy (RADA) is to improve the profitability and resource use efficiency of farms in North West England by delivering high quality knowledge transfer that is focussed on the needs of farmers.**

The philosophy of RADA is to view ‘sustainability’ and ‘profitability’ as inextricably linked. Based at Reaseheath College, we use government and European funding to provide training, advice and knowledge transfer which meets the needs of our region’s farmers and their employees. We also inform the rural sector and those that develop policy for it.

The RADA Team and partner organisations are professional, accessible, farmer focussed and flexible in their dedication to filling the skills and knowledge gaps that the farming community needs in order to be profitable and sustainable.

Our programmes are continually evolving and aim to provide skills and knowledge in all areas of managing businesses and people, technical farming issues and environmental matters.

The newsletter will keep you up to date with what is on offer. If there is anything that you need that is not in our training programmes, then please contact the team on 01270 613 195 or at [hub@reaseheath.ac.uk](mailto:hub@reaseheath.ac.uk) and we will endeavour to help. ■



**RADA**  
**GROWING YOUR FARMING BUSINESS**



# RADA News

## Livestock North West Programme gathers pace

The North West Development Agency (NWDA) fund the Livestock North West Programme (LNW), which covers the counties of Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria. The topic areas covered by the programme are:

- **Animal Health and Welfare Planning**
- **Nutrient/Manure Management Planning**
- **Resource Efficiency Auditing**
- **Performance Grants (only available if you have had a plan or audit conducted)**
- **ICT Network**

The funding supports demonstration events, farmer groups, monitor farms and the on-line ICT network, so this is not training (which is covered by the RDPE Skills Cheshire programme) but provides valuable forums where technologies relevant to the topic areas can be discussed and demonstrated.

Within Cheshire, there are two monitor farms, which are used as the focus for demonstration events and provide information for discussion. The Cheshire dairy monitor farm is Clive Hall Farm, Winsford, run by Phil Asbury (Fletcher and Co.). The farm has 76 ha of grassland and operates an extensive grazing system with block calving of 210 Friesian Jersey crosses doing 5,400 litres. The project objective for the farm is to reduce running costs by 15% using the principles of lean management (see article below).

The Cheshire beef and sheep monitor farm is Langford Farm at Lostock Green near Northwich, run by John and Rachel Gate. They

operate 157 ha, 130 Hereford cross suckler cows, which are put to a British Blonde bull, and 525 mule ewes that run with Texel and Rouge rams. The project focus for the Gates is to increase production from the resources that they have. Highly successful open days were held on the monitor farms in February of 2011, with more events to come.

LNW also provides for the plans and audits necessary to help with health and welfare, nutrient planning and resource efficiency, which must be completed if farmers want to draw down on the Performance Grants which cover a 40% contribution to capital investments needed to achieve the plans and audits. There are minimum and maximum spend restrictions on the Performance Grants and these should be clarified with the RDPE Team at NWDA (contact details below).

So far, over 230 farmers in the Region have benefited from the audits and plans, with subsequent applications for performance Grants which have covered:

**Health and Welfare:** back-flush systems, heat detection, comfort mattresses and cubicles, specialist handling systems and specialist calf feeders.

**Nutrient Management:** covering middens and silage pits, slurry aerators and separators.

**Resource Efficiency:** heat recovery systems, solar panels and plate coolers.

LNW has in recent months supported farmer group meetings held in Cheshire and Merseyside. These include Plain Farmers (looking at Benchmarking, production costs and a maize study day), Cheshire Young farmers (adding value to farm products, business expansion, grain trading, genetics/genomics, renewable energy and business planning) and Wright and Morten

Vets Group (parasite control, in conjunction with SAC).

**To get involved in the LNW programme, you can use the following contacts:**

- **Farmer Groups, Monitor farms and Demonstration events in Cheshire and Merseyside:** Lesley Innes at RADA on 01270 625131 ext 308
- **Animal Health and Welfare Planning:** SAC Consulting on 08456 040535
- **Nutrient/Manure Management Planning:** Promar International on 01270 616800
- **Resource Efficiency Auditing:** Promar International on 01270 616800
- **Performance Grants:** The RDPE Team at NWDA on 01768 861306
- **ICT Network:** Visit the LNW web-site at [www.livestocknw.co.uk](http://www.livestocknw.co.uk)

## Making more money from meat

Reaseheath College has launched the first of a series of short training programmes to help local farmers and smallholders make maximum profit from the animals they rear.

The meat appreciation workshops have been designed by Master butcher Steve Brooks and senior butcher Marc Brewer and are being held at Brooks Butchers in High Street, Sandbach.

Those attending gain a basic knowledge of how beef, pork and lamb are butchered into individual cuts of meat. They will also learn how to prepare value added products such as sausages, burgers and grill sticks. The all important costing and pricing of individual cuts of meat will be a key priority.



*Above: Meat appreciation classes Butchery class with butchers Marc Brewer and Daniel Crick.*

The workshops are limited to groups of six and will take place between 4pm and 8pm over two consecutive days.

The training programme is funded through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) Skills and those qualifying, who must live in Cheshire, will pay £64 – just 30% of the full cost.

Susanne Price, Customer Relationship Manager at Reaseheath's Enterprise Delivery Hub in Nantwich, which is running the programme, said: "We want to help rural businesses maximise the potential of locally reared animals. Hopefully this will go some way to ensuring the future viability of the farming industry. We are offering a full costing model to help producers understand how to get as much profit as possible out of each carcass."

"As a master butcher, Steve makes sure that his staff and shop operate at the highest level and I can think of no one better to lead the training on these courses."

Steve Brooks, who with his staff runs popular meat appreciation classes for interested public at his shop, said: "Butchery is a craft requiring a high level of understanding of what the customer wants and how to meet these requirements. By passing on some of these skills, we hope to encourage producers to make the most from each cut of meat, both in quality and profit."

The first Butchery Appreciation Workshops were held in May. Further

dates will be available throughout June. More workshops will be held to meet demand, so if you are interested and have your farm/rural business in Cheshire, give Susanne Price a call on 01270 613 195. ■

## Reaseheath College welcomes new farm manager

In case you missed it, in February this year Reaseheath College appointed a new farm manager. Pedigree dairy specialist Mark Yearsley has taken over from Sam Grundy, who is semi retiring after working for the College for 38 years.

Mark has particular strengths in cow genetics and dairy production and years of experience managing large and very successful dairy herds. His appointment coincides with Reaseheath's purchase of the world class Genus MOET dairy herd.

The Genus herd, renowned as one of the highest genetic merit herds in the world, has been based at the college for the past ten years. Now renamed the Reaseheath Herd, it comprises 250 dairy cows and around 200 youngstock. One of Mark's first aims is to streamline the management system and to increase milk yield by building up the herd to 300 using home bred replacements.

He said: "I am thrilled to have become part of one of the top land based colleges in the country and having the chance to progress a top

quality herd. I would very much like the dairy herd to be rated in the top 5% in the country for milk production.

"I am also looking forward to work in education because I would very much like to be part of the next farming generation. It is important that Reaseheath's farm is run as a successful commercial business as it shows students the possibilities which the industry offers."

Helped by a 10 strong team, Mark will also head up the college's award winning sheep flock and state of the art, welfare friendly, pig unit.

He added: "I am very impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of Reaseheath's agricultural staff. The college facilities are unique in the region, which is why we attract students from throughout Cheshire and further afield."

Originally from Warwickshire and from a non farming background, Mark's previous post was that of farm manager of an organic dairy farm in Shropshire. He has also managed a 1,000 acre estate in Cornwall with a 400 head pedigree Holstein dairy herd and 100 milking Jersey cows.

He has three children aged between 15 and 21. His wife Debs is a physiotherapist.

Sam Grundy will continue to work part-time at Reaseheath and will monitor some of the college's upcoming agricultural projects. His first project is to help with the development and launch of an innovative farm-scale anaerobic digestion plant. ■

*Below: Sam Grundy (left) and Mark Yearsley.*







# RDPE Skills Programme launched in Cheshire

**There are now significant opportunities for farmers and people involved with rural businesses in Cheshire to get support for skills training that will help them develop and improve their business.**

The RDPE funding (part from the EU and part from the UK Government) comes through the North West Development Agency and the programme is co-ordinated and administered through the Enterprise Delivery Hub at Reaseheath College. The support covers 70% of the costs, so that farmers and those involved in rural enterprises get high quality training for 30% of the cost.

## Who can get the training and what is covered?

Funding is provided to encourage all types of rural development, such as helping farmers, foresters, small business and community ventures among others. It operates until March 2013 and trainees must have their business based in Cheshire.

**There are two areas covered:**

### 1. Vocational Training and Information for farmers, foresters and food companies.

Eligible beneficiaries under this measure include individual trainees and training providers. Individual trainees are targeted at those within the agricultural, forestry and food sectors and must be engaged in a business, organisation or social enterprise dependent on agriculture or utilises agricultural products.

Forestry sector trainees must be engaged in a business, organisation or social enterprise dependent on woodland or utilises woodland or forestry products.

Training providers must be running courses matched to the needs of the above sectors and support will only be available relating to qualifying trainees.

**A broad range of topics are covered by the programme the main ones being:**

- Management skills
- Business skills
- Practical and technical livestock, crop and non-food crop husbandry skills
- ICT and the use of other new technology specific to agriculture and forestry
- Animal health and welfare
- Benchmarking
- Supply chain efficiency
- Climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Resource use
- Bio-energy
- Environmental land management topics
- Training to support primary processing in the agricultural and forestry sectors

### 2. Training and information for small rural businesses

Those who can apply under this measure include economic actors envisaged as beneficiaries and businesses, social enterprises, charities and other formally constituted groups.

**Eligible activity could include training in:**

- ICT skills
- Business skills, including coaching and mentoring
- Traditional rural skills
- Diversification out of agriculture

## What type of training is covered?

**Standard formal training is eligible of course, but it is recognised that different types of knowledge transfer are necessary to provide flexibility for people who want to receive training, so other training forums are covered, including:**

- Seminars
- Business clubs
- Workshops and farm demonstrations
- Support and mentoring
- Supporting knowledge & technology transfer
- Technical and management information
- Support for knowledge and technology transfer networks

## What training is coming up?

**The RADA Team are working with training providers to develop courses on:**

- Animal health and welfare (including youngstock health and rearing, DIY AI and disease control)
- Mastitis and lameness control (individual farm plans and mentoring schemes)
- NVZ compliance and nutrient management planning (1-2-1 support)
- Precision farming
- Managing your rural family business
- Commercial egg production
- Women in rural business
- Finance and book keeping
- People management and leadership

**There is more information on pages 9 and 10 of the RADA news and you can find out more by contacting the RADA Team on 01270 613 195. Keep an eye out also for more information in future editions. ■**

# AD Plant at Reaseheath to demonstrate renewable energy technology to the farming community

Biogas industry leaders have praised Reaseheath College's efforts to independently demonstrate the viability of smaller scale renewable energy production on farms.

Speaking at the commissioning of the college's demonstration anaerobic digestion plant, Charlotte Morton, Chief Executive of The Anaerobic Digestion and Biogas Association, said that results from the plant would make a significant contribution to the understanding of both farmers and technologists.

Reaseheath's bespoke demonstration plant is based on a small scale, modular system which can be replicated commercially on farms or in horticultural businesses. It demonstrates two low capital, small scale systems: a Continuous Stirred Tank Reactor (CSTR) digester taking slurry from the 300 head Reaseheath dairy herd plus straw based manure from the college's commercial, 130 sow, high welfare, pig unit, and a smaller plug and play digester taking slurry only.

The project is being run in collaboration with local farmers and will particularly assess financial viability and the efficient use of available resources. The college also plans to measure the effect of freely available feedstocks such as grass clippings, maize silage and horse manure as cost effective enhancers.

Farmers will be invited to tour the plant, on the college's Nantwich, Cheshire, campus, later this year. Experts will be on hand to ensure visitors fully understand the processes and results from a monitoring programme will be made available. The college plans to offer relevant training and independent research and advice based on its scientific findings.

Said Charlotte Morton: "This is a fantastic demonstration plant. The fact that it is based at an agricultural college which can offer hands-on training means that it is capable of making a big impact on the industry."

"The Coalition Government has made a commitment to deliver "a huge increase in energy from waste through anaerobic digestion". To achieve this, we will need to attract a large number of producers and the industry will need to gear up fast, which includes getting training, so it is excellent to see a working demonstration AD plant at an agricultural college.

"Anaerobic digestion can produce about 20% of the UK's domestic gas demand so it can play a very significant part in renewable energy production. It offers a fantastic way of converting farm waste into domestic energy through an entirely natural process.

"On farm AD plants of all sizes can make an important contribution, through generating renewable energy from farm wastes and/or mitigating methane emissions from slurries,

which is why Reaseheath's model is particularly good. It demonstrates the use of all feedstocks via systems which fit into all environments.

Russell Mulliner, Managing Director of installing company Marches Biogas said: "This system allows farmers and students to fully understand the whole process and how best to produce biogas. By gathering information from a control panel, college staff will be able to do a full mass balance by assessing the rate of feed into the plant and measuring the gas after processing. These findings will then be disseminated to farmers, who will be able to link it to their own situation. The industry desperately needs a technology provider like this."

Electricity produced from the system will be directed to an on-site sub station and is likely to supply 15% of Reaseheath's total campus demand. The power could be used to heat student accommodation and commercial greenhouses as well as meeting the demands of the farm.

The £900,000 demonstration plant was part financed by The Rural

Development Programme for England and supported by Defra, the North West Regional Development Agency and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas.

**Reaseheath College plans to provide farmers and other operators of on-farm anaerobic digestion plants with training in engineering (planning, regulations and safety) and in practical on-farm application (process optimisation, digestate, feedstocks). For further information contact Reaseheath's Enterprise Delivery Hub on 01270 613 195; email [hub@reaseheath.ac.uk](mailto:hub@reaseheath.ac.uk)**

## Could 'Lean Thinking' help top dairy farmers improve and sustain profits?

Reaseheath College is delivering the Rural Development Skills Programme for England and is offering dairy farmers in the NW a valuable chance to join in small dynamic workshops on lean production management. This is a unique opportunity to benefit from the working knowledge of the efficient production management systems used by the likes of Wiseman's applied to the running of your dairy farm. The third series of workshops started in February 2011 and more are planned depending on demand. To ensure maximum farmer participation and benefit from the workshops will be kept to a maximum of ten farmers so it is important to let RADA know if you are interested.

The lean management tool, training and implementation programme has been put together by Kay Carson, a dairy farming consultant who worked with Professor Coleman at Manchester University on their ground breaking 1996 report on the industry and subsequently devised the Milkbench+ dairy benchmarking tool for DairyCo, which is proving very popular and useful with dairy farmers all over GB.





Kay has been working with Reaseheath, Wiseman Dairies and DairyCo on the Lean Management approach, which takes farmers above and beyond Milkbench+. When asked who the programme is for, Kay said, "This is definitely an approach for business farmers and the management techniques collected under the lean management banner will not suit all farmers. It challenges the 'traditional' approach to farming, in which previous experience and instinct are the main decision drivers. Lean management techniques are rooted in the premise that performance can be measured and the best decisions are made in the light of the best information. It therefore stresses the need to collect data which can be processed into meaningful information. This allows decisions to be driven by the simple objectives of adding value to outputs, eliminating waste or both.

"In our experience so far, this approach suits farmers who are seeking to improve their current performance and understand that, in the first two years of implementation, this will increase their management load. This is not because of the demands made by lean management as such but by the need to change management habits and establish new protocols and routines. Typically these are businessmen who happen to farm and understand customer needs. They welcome a management system that delivers not only improved profits, but does so through improved physical performance in areas where there is customer demand, such as measurable welfare improvements (e.g. lowering mobility scores).

**For all of them the attraction is one or more of the following:**

- (i) A management system that allows them to grow their businesses in an economically sustainable manner**
- (ii) To structure the dairy operation in such a way that they are able to delegate jobs to paid staff without risking a fall in performance.**
- (iii) Access to reliable information that identifies whether the dairy enterprise is performing according to plan any day and every day."**

The introduction of lean management on dairy farms has been trialled on a number of Cheshire farms and it is already showing benefits in increased production efficiency and improved business management. The project began its life at the Livestock North West, Cheshire Dairy Monitor Farm in Winsford, and is now being extended to other units across the county.

The workshop aim to equip dairy farmers with new management skills which have proved successful in manufacturing industry and, increasingly, in any process driven industry, and to provide effective tools that will help make efficiency gains on farm.

Dairy farmer John Riley commented after attending the workshop programme, "I have been encouraged to look differently at the management of my farm by using the lean management ideas. I am looking forward to implementing the computer program which seems to tie all aspects of recording information in one place. Lean management should help me focus on my costs and outputs helping me realise my strengths and find my weaknesses."

**If you think that the Lean Management approach is for you, then contact us on 01270 613 195 to discuss how you can get involved in future workshop programmes. ■**

## Hard thinking for Simple Minds discussion group

"There seem to be discussion groups for dairy farmers operating extensive grazing based, block calving systems, and there are discussion groups for those running high input:high output herds", says Reaseheath College's Head of Agriculture, Martyn East. "But we know that grazed grass is the cheapest feed on farm and pressure on costs is real for all dairy farmers running all kinds of systems. So, I thought, 'why are there no discussion

groups specifically to help farmers who have high output per cow systems and want to make the most of their cheapest feed input?' So we decided to talk to some Cheshire farmers with high output per cow systems and gain their opinion. Their response was clear, they wanted a forum for tackling these issues and the Simple Minds discussion group was born."

Getting more out of grazed grass and forage from high yielding (8,000 to 10,000 litre) Holstein type cows might seem to be something of a 'holy grail' – nice to think about, but impossible to achieve. "But that's no reason for ignoring the issues," retorts Martyn. "We are not talking about these guys converting to block calved grazing systems, we are talking about helping get more milk from grass and tackling the issues that this creates in high yielding cows. Even getting another 500 litres from cheap grazed and silage grass can make a big financial difference in margins and we are going to find out how it can be done and managed within the context of the system."

Justin Rees from Genus and Noel Gowan from Grasstec in Ireland have given a hand in getting the group up and running and their first meeting was at the end of March 2011. The RDPE Skills Cheshire will provide 70% of the funding required for the group to hold meetings and bring in the expertise that it wishes to tackle the technical agenda that the group will set itself. It will be interesting to hear in future how they are getting on.

And why 'Simple Minds'? "This group seems to have grown up as teenagers in the 1980's," explains Martyn. "We could have chosen 'Duran Duran' as a tag I suppose, but it doesn't have the same ring, does it!" To tackle such a big issue head on, these farmers obviously don't have simple minds, but we get the angle.

**There is funding available for bespoke training and expert knowledge transfer for this kind of discussion group activity, so if you wish to find out more, contact the Reaseheath Enterprise Delivery Hub on 01270 613 195. ■**



# RADA Events

## Opportunities from the Cheshire RDPE Skill Programme

### Women who manage their Rural Family Business

Want your Business to Grow but don't know how? Seize this opportunity to explore your options. Improve your performance and increase your sales and revenue.

This programme is designed to inspire women to improve their management capabilities. It will equip you with the skills to move your business forward with confidence and to help you 'build a better business'.

Learn in a supportive environment with like-minded women. Share your experiences and develop your skills with master classes and coaching.

#### Who is it aimed at?

- Women managing the family business
- Women running a rural business

**Six sessions – July to December 2011**

**Time:** 1pm – 5pm

**Venue:** to be arranged

#### Session One - Developing Your Own Vision and Ensuring Achievement

- Where's the bar? Setting a standard of excellence
- Where do we want to be? Clarifying direction and purpose
- What kind of leader am I? Inspiring, motivating and innovating other?
- Break down the walls! Overcoming blocks to success
- Communicating your vision and engaging your people (customers, staff and suppliers)

#### Session Two - Managing Performance

- How do we measure performance?
- Aligning and engaging others to maximise performance
- Round Pegs in Square Holes? Managing poor performance and getting the best of others
- Action Planning and Time Management
- Monitor and Reviewing Performance

#### Session Three - Influencing and communications skills

- Effective Influencing – getting the results you want
- Clarity of Communication – are you hearing what I'm saying?
- Why do they do that? Understanding others and how to get the best out of them
- Understanding your behaviours and the impact they have on other people

- Developing a more flexible leadership style
- Dealing with difficult situations and conflict

#### Session Four - Sales & Marketing

- Developing and reviewing a Marketing Strategy relevant for your business
- Setting KPI's for your staff
- Researching new markets
- Using different techniques to engage new customers

#### Session Five - Negotiating Skills

- Defining your negotiation style
- The negotiation process
- Pre negotiation – preparing and planning
- Confidently concluding negotiation (knowing your bottom line and reaching a win/win)

#### Session Six - Selection, Recruitment and Retention

- Effective recruitment and selection
- Personality profiling – how to ensure that new staff will fit with my business
- Equipping my staff for success
- Keeping quality staff

#### Optional Sessions

- Performance review and appraisal
- Social media
- Financial planning (basic & advanced)

**To enquire about funding to support this programme or for further information about costs please contact: Suzanne Price, Tel: 01270 613 195, email: [susannep@reaseheath.ac.uk](mailto:susannep@reaseheath.ac.uk)**

### Commercial Egg Producers Training Programme

The training programme will benefit entrants to the industry as well as existing producers in commercial settings and will cover all matters relating to poultry, housing and egg production.

The training will be based at Reaseheath College and is running from July to August. You can attend the whole programme or dip in and out to fit your needs. The sessions will be delivered by experts from the Minster Veterinary Practice, who have a successful track record in quality training around the country.

#### Day One - Veterinary Health 1 Tuesday 19th July

- Types of disease causing agents

- Recognition of disease signs versus normal
- Common diseases affecting laying birds including respiratory, parasitic and gastrointestinal
- Treatment and disease prevention strategies including pasture management
- Good stockman ship

#### Day Two – Veterinary Health 2 Tuesday 26th July

- Feed issues affecting birds
- Water issues affecting birds
- Notifiable diseases – history, recognition and control measures
- Zoonoses

#### Day Three – Laboratory Practical Tuesday 2nd August

- Post mortem sample submission
- Basic anatomy of poultry
- Common disease lesions
- Laboratory testing and lab sample submission

#### Day Four – Bio security Tuesday 9th August

- Understanding of reasons for bio security
- The routes that diseases can enter the flock
- How disease transmission can be prevented
- Practical disinfection and routine hygiene testing techniques

#### Day Five – Vaccination and Medication Tuesday 16th August

- Principles of the immune response in birds and vaccination
- Vaccination techniques
- Types of vaccines
- Principle of medicating birds
- Types of medications
- Application of medications

#### Day Six – Welfare Tuesday 23rd August

- Legislation relating to welfare in birds
- Understanding the legislation
- Practical welfare on the farm – how to recognise issues and improve welfare and catching techniques

#### Follow on sessions

These are currently in development and will follow the first six modules:

- Humane Slaughter
- Housing and Ventilation
- Egg Production and Handling
- Health and Safety
- Insect and Pest control

**To get more information and book a place contact Emily Welch on 01270 613 195 or email: [emilyw@reaseheath.ac.uk](mailto:emilyw@reaseheath.ac.uk)**



## Get into Anaerobic Digestion with Reaseheath and RDPE Skills

Now that Reaseheath College has its farm AD plant up and running, producing heat and electricity energy and much information that is relevant to those farmers thinking about farm-scale AD, it is time for RADA to plan training for all in the community. This means primarily for farmers, but we are also looking to hold sessions for those who have a role to play in helping farmers with the technology and finances. So we will be holding training not only for farmers, but also for bankers, planners and consultants that will be needed to help farmers implement the technology and reap the benefits.

As far as possible, training will be supported by the RDPE Skills Cheshire programme and we aim to start training sessions in September 2011 on the following outline:

### Open Workshops & AD Plant Tours

**Audience:** All those interested in AD – farmers, bankers, consultants, associated technology suppliers, local government personnel (planners, waste management, environmental)

#### Agenda:

- Overview of the AD market and implications of farm scale digestion
- Feed in Tariffs / ROC's / RHI details
- Feedstock selection
- Plant costs / Funding Biogas projects / is AD Biogas production profitable
- Digestate standards
- Planning / permitting / Environment Agency issues
- Tax credit opportunities
- Plant tour

We will bring in specialists to cover digestate standards planning / permitting / Environment Agency issues. Daniel Galloway, RADA's Sustainability Technology Specialist, will also deliver expertise, alongside Sam Grundy, RADA's Farm Demonstration Officer, who deals with everything practical that the community need to know about on-farm AD. We will also use representatives from Marches Biogas, who have designed, built and commissioned the AD plant at Reaseheath College Farm. We are also in discussions with Daniel Corden from Cheshire East Planning Department over the availability of speakers who can help on planning issues.

### Innovation Breakfasts

**Audience:** Technology suppliers and business opportunities to add value to the farm surrounding AD, and including research opportunities.

#### Agenda:

- Overview of the AD market and implications of farm scale digestion
- Introduction of attendees business area of interest
- Key note speaker from the AD industry

- Research tax credit opportunities, Bill Owen who spoke at the last event
- Plant Tour
- Digester results and farm scale opportunities/market gaps

### Farming Discussion Groups

**Audience:** Farmers

**Agenda:** To increase the awareness and knowledge of AD and the system at Reaseheath, Daniel Galloway and Sam Grundy will be available to local farmer discussion groups to speak on all relevant topic areas. Discussions will be followed up with regular updates from the revenue, cost savings and lessons learnt from plant operation.

### Farmers Training

**Audience:** Farmers

**Agenda:** Titles for a variety of topics that could be covered in specialist workshops

- Lean operation of an AD plant
- How to prepare your farm for AD?
- Tendering, getting it right first time
- Obtaining planning permission for on farm AD
- Implications of input feedstocks (biogas yields, bedding and potential problems)
- How to obtain food waste and make your farm bio secure
- Obtaining the greatest value from digestate
- Finding an on farm energy use and diversification opportunities
- How to obtain a grid connection
- Economics of AD
- Business plan development for on farm AD
- Financing and funding your AD project.

If you are interested in any of these sessions, please contact and register with Daniel Galloway on 01270 613 195. Sessions will be organised to meet demand. ■

## A wide range of relevant training workshops for ruminant livestock farmers and farm workers starting September 2011

The RADA Team are currently sourcing trainers and organising a wide range of workshops for ruminant livestock farmers. These sessions will cover:

- General animal health and welfare topics:
  - Fertility and DIY AI
  - Calf health and youngstock rearing
  - Sheep health and management
  - Disease control
  - Lameness and mastitis control
- Specific one-to-one mentoring to build a bespoke mastitis control plan for your herd
- Specific one-to-one mentoring to build a bespoke lameness control plan for your herd

- Handling NVZs and managing compliance

Details will appear in future RADA Newsletters, but to find out more and book places on any of these sessions, call us on 01270 613 195. ■

## Conferences for farmers and the wider industry

### Dairy nutrition for winter 2011/12

With volatile feed prices and squeezed farm margins, the strategies that dairy farmers use for feeding this coming winter will make a big impact on their profitability. Issues will include:

- Rationing to make the most of dairy concentrates
- Alternative feed sources for TMR systems
- Making the most opportunities for cheaper feeding systems without compromising cow fertility, health and performance
- Planning ahead – balancing fibre, energy and protein sources for next year

We intend to hold a workshop style conference to help farmers with these issues in September 2011. Dates will be announced shortly and if you are interested in attending, please contact us on 01270 613 195. ■

## RADA Dairy Sustainability Conference in December 2011

Following on from the very successful Dairy Sustainability Conference held at Reaseheath last December, we will be holding another event in December 2011. This will be aimed at dairy farmers and the wider industry and our aim is to address some of the key issues facing dairy farmers today.

The philosophy at RADA is that sustainability means profitability, so the conference will focus on how to improve farm profits while reducing the impact of dairy farming on the wider farmed environment.

We are starting to put the day together now, so if there are topics that you want aired, or issues discussed, then please get in touch by contacting RADA on 01270 613 195. ■

## GUEST ARTICLE

# Exceeding customer needs: training into the future

**Sophie Throup, XLVets FarmSkills, Carlisle House, Dalston, Carlisle CA5 7JF. [sophie.throup@xlvet.co.uk](mailto:sophie.throup@xlvet.co.uk)**

If they really wanted to, the average farmers could go to a discussion group, evening seminar, day workshop or open farm meeting at least once every week of the year. Among all that choice, it's often hard to choose which 'days away' are worth going to and won't leave you drumming your fingers, thinking about all the work that has been left behind.

This need to make workshops relevant and business focused was one of the key aims of the FarmSkills project, set up by XLVets in 2008 and rolled out nationally a year later. The workshops aim to answer real business needs that farmers tell them about across a whole range of animal health and welfare topics – and now, on some business and staff management topics as well. FarmSkills workshops are all delivered in small group workshops of 6-8 people on farm and by vets who have had their own training styles improved by following the Train the Trainer workshop programme. The aims of the workshops are clear: to deliver practical, up to date, technical and business related skills to farmers in a participative way, leading to actions and business improvement. Each course has a documented series of outcomes and core competencies achieved by the attendees – which are the same for every course across the country, driving consistency and high standards.

During its pilot period of development, the FarmSkills team commissioned market research with 200 dairy and beef farmers across the UK and with its own panel of Farmer representatives. The feedback received showed that farmers in the research groups were encouraged to attend training that was:

- In small training groups
- On a local farm
- With training delivered by a highly qualified instructor
- Recommended by friends
- Providing practical skills that can be taken home and used

The research also showed that when business outcomes are clearly defined, paying for attending courses that will have a direct and positive impact on the profitability of the farm through improved animal welfare and technical skills of farm staff, is not a barrier to uptake.

It was interesting to note from the research carried out, that despite 51% of beef farmers having spent nothing on training in the 12 months before the research was carried out, the average price beef farmers were willing to pay for training that delivers useful skills and can make a difference to their farm was £50 per day. This contrasts with £65 as an average price for dairy farmers, who were asked the same question – although this went up to £80 for those dairy farmers who had attended a training course run by their vet. The difference can be partly explained by numbers of employees on a farm: the higher the number of employees, the higher the price they were willing to pay for training. In both cases though, it is encouraging to note that paying for investing in the right sort of skills training is seen as worth doing by both beef and dairy farmers – which is why it's so important to have clearly defined, practical workshops that respond to what farmers really want – and are therefore willing to pay for.

Sophie Throup, FarmSkills Manager for XLVets said: "Providing



value for money courses through practical, skills led training workshops, delivered by vets or industry experts with a depth of knowledge is at the heart of FarmSkills. We're constantly looking for ways we can make sure we are delivering what farmers tell us they need and thanks to RDPE funding opportunities with LANTRA LandSkills and colleges such as Reaseheath, Myerscough and The Duchy, we have been able to provide many of workshops at discounted prices, lowering the payment level for farmers across the UK. DIY AI and foot trimming courses prove most popular for us, but these are closely followed by lambing workshops, calf rearing and milking routines programmes. Staff and business development workshops are emerging markets for us and something we hope to be able to add to the skills base of our farmers with. We know from our feedback that if farmers know they will get a business benefit from attending, they are content to pay a fair price for training."

Since launching nationally, FarmSkills has delivered over 3,400 training days to more than 1,100 farmers across the UK. ■





# Case Study

One of the most popular workshops through FarmSkills is DIY AI, used by beef and dairy farmers to improve conception rates and profitability of the herd. Courses run throughout the UK and last for between 3 and 4 days in length.

FarmSkills vet Jonathan Statham, from Bishopton Veterinary Group, Ripon is one of several vets round the country, who deliver DIY AI training on a regular basis. "How to get cows in calf is the true aim of AI training," Jonathan reminds us. "Reproductive performance drives profitability in UK dairy herds and while the first hurdle may be heat detection, the job is far from done at that stage. There is plenty that may still go wrong before a successful insemination results in the delivery of a live calf and the year on year decline in dairy conception rates (CR) has pushed up the relative importance of CR to heat detection.



■ JONATHAN STATHAM

***"Do it yourself artificial insemination 'DIY AI' has provided an industry shaping combination of genetic free choice plus cost effectiveness. However, for consistently good results, attention to detail at every stage is vital. It is not enough to mechanically deliver semen in the general direction of the uterus. Successful AI requires three main points:***

- 1. Good quality semen***
- 2. Inseminated in the right place***

### ***3. Inseminated at the right time***

***"DIY AI offers a great opportunity to take control of reproductive performance in your herd. Attention to detail and overall herd health are critical for success."***

Dairy farmer, Chris Hodgson, farms 250 acres in partnership with his parents, milking 100 Holstein Friesian cows with 60 followers. His cows average 8700 litres and he currently has a calving index of 390 days. All cows and heifers at Providence Farm are inseminated artificially and in May 2010 Chris took part in a 3 day workshop at Bishopton Vets so he could start to be able to AI stock himself as well as through a local AI technician. Since going on the workshop, Chris has seen positive results in his conception rates and also appreciated learning more about the steps vets, farmers and AI technicians take to improve herd fertility. The first two cows he AI-ed were diagnosed as pregnant first time, which was a boost to his confidence although, as Chris observed, no two cows are the same!



■ CHRIS HODGSON

***"I'd always had a good relationship with my AI technician, but was interested to know how AI worked. I'd heard about the Bishopton DIY AI course through my local Grassland Society, and so applied to go along. Since going on the course, I have become more aware of heat detection and how I can help improve fertility on the farm. It has been a struggle at times, and serving heifers especially is tricky, but I'm pleased with the way that my DIY AI skills are having a positive benefit to the herd's fertility."***

Chris also finds the fact that you can choose when to service the cows a real benefit. At the moment, he AIs the cows on a night time when all the jobs are done and he is quiet and can concentrate on his technique. Going forward, Chris is looking to build on his skills over the coming months and to further improve conception rates. He is also hoping to move to sexed semen to help boost his follower numbers.

So to be worth that time away from farm, it is undoubted that skills training needs to be relevant, practical, business focused and good value for money. Why not talk to your local vet or call the FarmSkills helpline to see if we can arrange a course that's right for you. ■

# Information Hub

## Rearing for a Reason: maximising heifer potential

The first three months of a heifer's life are without doubt the most critical time in her growth and development. Calves that suffer from disease or inadequate nutrition early in life are more likely to have reduced fertility and milk yields in their first lactation and an increased risk of being culled. Paying close attention to management during this period is essential to help heifers reach breeding condition on time and in optimal health so that they not only fulfil their potential but also deliver maximum profitability.

Modern dairy cows are achieving much higher yields than they did a decade ago, however little has changed in the way we manage our heifers to ensure that they are prepared for their potential. In order for a Holstein heifer to calve down at 22-23 months with a bodyweight of 540-580kg she must achieve a daily live weight gain (LWG) of 750-800g. 1 in 4 UK heifers have low (<600g) daily LWGs in their first six months of life and this is directly linked to an increased age at first calving, reduced fertility in their first lactation and reduced milk yield.

### Heifer Facts from a recent study:

- 1 in 7 heifers fails to reach their first lactation
- 1 in 3 heifers fails to reach their second lactation
- Poor fertility or milk yield are the most common reasons for culling heifers post-calving

So what can you do to ensure your heifers get off to the best start?

### 1. Follow the '4 Q's' of colostrum control

Calves are born with no immunity and rely solely on colostrum to provide it with the protection it needs when it encounters disease. Without it they will suffer from poor health, low growth rates and higher mortality. The majority of scour outbreaks that we see in newborn calves are due to inadequate colostrum management. Following the four principles of colostrum management is the most cost-effective way of ensuring future health:

#### Quickly – as soon as possible!

A calf is only able to absorb antibodies through its gut wall for the first six hours of life, after which its ability to do so decreases rapidly, therefore it is really important to maximise colostrum uptake in the first 6 hours. However, even once the gut has 'closed' and antibodies cannot be absorbed colostrum can still provide a protective 'binding' effect in the gut by preventing

absorption of bacteria and viruses and also stimulates rapid gut development, essential if target optimal growth is to be achieved.

#### Quality – How good is your colostrum?

It can be very difficult to assess the quality of colostrum on eye alone. If you are concerned about quality if for example you think calves are receiving sufficient colostrum but are still underperforming, then using a simple device such as colostrometer, can give you an indication of colostrum quality.

#### Quantity- don't leave it to chance

A minimum of 3 litres of good quality colostrum is needed to ensure that a calf has received sufficient antibodies. Aim for 3-4 litres in the first 6 hours and a further 3-4 litres in the following 24 hours of life is critical. It will take a calf 20 minutes of continual suckling to consume 2 litres, so even if you see the calf having a few suckles, don't assume it's had enough.

#### Quietly

Absorption of antibodies is significantly reduced if the calf is stressed when it receives the colostrum compared to those that are calm. Uptake of antibodies is also greater if the dam is present.

### 2. Exploit feed conversion efficiency when it is highest in the first 6 weeks of life.

This can be achieved by increasing milk replacer intake either by increasing the volume fed or gradually increasing the concentration e.g. from 10-15% solids. Two litres fed twice a day is rarely sufficient for the modern calf as to meet their maintenance and growth requirements they need up to 1kg of milk replacer solid per day, even more in cold weather. Ensuring buckets/troughs are clean is also important – calves have a sense of smell 6-8 times greater than ours and are unlikely to achieve good intakes from dirty buckets.

From two weeks of age ad lib calf-specific concentrates should be made available aiming to increase intakes to 2.5kg/calf/day at weaning to optimise rumen function and growth post-weaning. Clean fibre in the form of hay or straw should also be readily available and placing this in a rack will keep faecal contamination and potential disease spread to a minimum.

Whilst there is a cost involved with increased milk replacer use, this is more than recovered by the resultant lower age at calving, increased first lactation yields and heifers that are 'fit not fat'. It is estimated that achieving the target of 24 months at first calving saves £50 per month.

### 3. Maintain the optimal environment to reduce disease

Providing calves with a clean, dry and draught free environment is essential. Water is a very effective way of spreading disease amongst calves as it creates aerosols of bacteria and viruses which can easily enter the calves lungs. Therefore try to minimise the amount of water (other than fresh drinking water) in the calf pens by washing buckets etc in a separate area and dry sweeping areas rather than hosing down. Urea from soiled, wet bedding is very caustic and can damage the lining of the lungs, increasing the risk of pneumonia, therefore a regular supply of clean fresh bedding is needed.

### 4. Do not mix groups

Young calves are particularly vulnerable to disease and mixing them with older calves or cattle will expose them to a range of bacteria and viruses that their developing immune system cannot cope with. Rearing in batches according to size and age will reduce the risk of exposure to disease as well as allowing nutritional and management needs to be tailored to the individual group.

### 5. Monitor growth rates

Measuring calf weight and height at two separate points in time is sufficient to assess whether you are achieving target growth weights.

### 6. Keep good records!

Without good records it is difficult to assess mortality and disease rates and more importantly to monitor progress once changes are made.



■ Sara Pedersen BSc(Hons) BVetMed  
CertCHP MRCVS, Nantwich Farm Vets (part  
of Nantwich Veterinary Group)

**nantwich** | **farm vets**  
part of nantwich | veterinary group



# NVZ's - Prepare for Changes

**With the number of NVZ inspections and failures on the increase it is time to ensure farm businesses are compliant with the regulations. Many farmers do not have complete records to satisfy an inspection. Simply keeping a record of manure spread in a diary is not suitable for an inspection. In summary an NVZ plan must encompass the following:**

- **Total area of your farm.**
- **Calculation showing existing storage capacity and whether you need to provide extra storage capacity.**
- **The number and type of livestock kept on your farm and the amount of time the livestock spent on the holding during the previous calendar year.**
- **A calculation of the total amount of nitrogen produced by all animals kept on your farm.**
- **Livestock manure moved onto or off the farm including quantities, dates or details of recipients.**
- **Dates when field sites are used for the temporary storage of poultry and solid manure.**
- **A nitrogen fertiliser plan showing the crop type and date sown, soil nitrogen supply (SNS), crop nitrogen requirement and details of each planned application of organic manure and manufactured nitrogen fertiliser.**
- **Actual applications of manufactured nitrogen fertiliser and organic manure including dates of application, quantities applied and type.**

Farmers only have until January 2012 to ensure they have sufficient storage during the closed periods. Farmers do not have much time if additional storage is required to obtain planning permission, arrange construction and obtain planning approval. There is some scope to reduce storage requirements by diverting clean water away from stores and separation of solids. In some cases farmers may be able to move youngstock to a different holding i.e. contract rear dairy heifers.

If farmers are thinking of storing manure in field heaps they need to be aware of the rules allowing their use. Only manure which is solid enough to be stacked in a free standing heap may be

stored in a field. Manure heaps must not be located within 10m of a land drain, surface water and 50m from a well, spring or borehole. Heaps must not be stored on land likely to become flooded or waterlogged. Farmers need to ensure they leave a two year gap before returning to the same field heap and they must be marked on the risk maps.

Farmers need to be aware that individual field records are required for each crop grown. These records are not just to record the amount of manure applied. The individual field record must show a record of crop N required to the growing crop and the amount of nitrogen in the soil that is likely to be available to the crop (soil nitrogen supply). This must be done for grassland by the 1<sup>st</sup> January each year before any application of manure or manufactured N is applied. For arable crops or reseed this will be before any first application of manufactured or manure N is applied.

The individual field record must then show the planned amount of nitrogen available from manure and manufactured fertiliser which will be available to the crop. This plan has to be completed before each application of organic manure or manufactured nitrogen fertiliser is applied. When planning the amount of manure applied it will be essential to ensure the restriction on the timing of applications is observed. In addition the plan must ensure that the limit of 170 kg/ha of total N from all organic manures applied to land in any 12 month period averaged over the area of the holding is observed.

The individual field plan must ensure the amount of nitrogen from manure and manufactured fertiliser does not exceed the upper limit known as the N max limit. The N max limit must be considered when planning applications of manure or manufactured nitrogen. Farmers need to ensure that the average nitrogen application rate to the following crop does not exceed this limit for the particular crop type being grown.

If the plan has been followed then the plan becomes the actual record of all applications of manure and manufactured fertiliser otherwise any deviation should be recorded as and when required.

Farmers must be aware that from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 spreading of slurry above 4 meters will not be allowed. Slurry spread onto bare soils or stubble land will need to be incorporated as soon as practicable, and within 24 hours unless it is applied by a band spreader or injected under the soil surface. FYM applied to bare soil or stubbles will also need to be incorporated if the land is sloping and is within 50 meters of a ditch, stream or waterway.

**Further information can be obtained from DEFRA's Guidance for Farmers in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones which has templates to assist with record keeping. Harvey Hughes Ltd has developed an NVZ Management Plan which complies with the NVZ regulation and is in an easy layout which allows for the review and update as and when required. The team at Harvey Hughes do provide cross compliance audits to ensure that farming businesses are compliant in all areas of cross compliance for further details please contact Andrew Nicholas on 0161 927 7562 or 07816 950 251 Email: [andrew.nicholas@harveyhughes.com](mailto:andrew.nicholas@harveyhughes.com)**



■ **Andrew Nicholas**

**HARVEY HUGHES**  
INDEPENDENT RURAL CONSULTANTS





# Making sure that wormer resistance doesn't rear its head in cattle – EBLEX and DairyCo research the solutions

Dr Elizabeth Berry, DairyCo research and development manager, looks at the outcomes of a DairyCo and EBLEX jointly funded study on Control of Worms Sustainability (COWS). This project was supported by RUMA (Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance) and NOAH (National Office of Animal Health).

Endoparasites can cause a wide variety of clinical signs depending on the species involved but all cause general loss in production, decrease in fertility and poor growth rates.

In comparison to the sheep industry, there have been few reported episodes in the published literature on anthelmintic resistance in the bovine. Surveillance data from various sources indicates that *Ostertagia ostertagi*, the main parasite associated with disease and *Cooperia* spp. are very common in young cattle in their first grazing season and the main contributor to faecal worm egg counts particularly where treatment failures are suspected.

*Dictyocaulus viviparus* has been increasingly reported in first year grazing calves. Infections due to *Fasciola hepatica* may cause a loss in production

in milking cows during the winter and can be clinically difficult to detect. The areas where fluke have been diagnosed are increasing in the UK and this may be a problem in other countries where grazing is practiced.

Anthelmintic resistance is one of the reasons for apparent anthelmintic inefficiency, but other reasons include:

■ **Dosing with insufficient anthelmintic due to:**

- underestimation of the animal's weight;
- poorly maintained dosing equipment

■ **Failure to follow the manufacturer's instructions by:**

- not storing the products correctly;
- using products beyond their use-by date;
- applying products incorrectly, or

under adverse weather conditions (pour-ons);

- mixing anthelmintics with other products.

■ **Rapid re-infection of animals after treatment from highly infective pastures.**

■ **Use of the incorrect drug for the target worms.**

The COWS project looked at the different worm challenges and issues faced by spring calving dairy herds, autumn calving dairy herds and all year round calvers.

As well as giving guidelines for the use of anthelmintics (wormers) and worm control in cattle, the research also highlights the particular risks and features of worm control in different dairy systems and suggests appropriate methods of control.

The following guidelines are recommended and these are based on the successful Sustainable Control of Parasites in Sheep that is used as the industry standard in the UK.

Guideline	Comment
<b>Work out a control strategy with your veterinarian or advisor.</b>	Health planning using specialist knowledge and ongoing consultation.
<b>Use effective quarantine strategies to prevent the importation of resistant worms in newly purchased cattle.</b>	Cattle bought into the herd can be a potential source of introducing resistant alleles into a herd.
<b>Test for anthelmintic efficacy on your farm.</b>	While resistance is still rare in cattle nematodes, treatment failures do occur. It is important to monitor efficacy as underdosing can select for anthelmintic resistance.
<b>Administer anthelmintics effectively.</b>	Administer the right dose in the correct way following manufacturers' instructions
<b>Use anthelmintics only when necessary.</b>	There will be a 'trade off' between tolerating a certain level of parasitism and minimising selection for anthelmintic resistance. Faecal egg count monitoring has an important role.
<b>Select the appropriate anthelmintic for the task.</b>	Consider narrow spectrum treatments whenever possible, use rotation of wormer families in appropriate ways.
<b>Adopt strategies to preserve susceptible worms on the farm.</b>	Aim to reduce heavy selection for anthelmintic resistance when treating adult cattle, immune older animals or when dosing on low contamination pastures.
<b>Reduce dependence on anthelmintics.</b>	Alternative control measures include grazing management using sheep or older immune animals.

## Quarantine treatments

These should be on a risk based approach taking into account where the new animals have come from in respect of fluke areas and previous treatments.

Pasture can be split in high, medium or low risk according to previous grazing management.

Time of year	High risk for worm infestation	Medium risk for worm infestation	Low risk for worm infestation
<b>Spring</b>	Grazed in the previous year by first year calves.	Grazed in the previous year by adult or second year cattle.	Newly reseeded as either grass or forage crops. Previously grazed by sheep or been in conservation management.
<b>Mid July onwards</b>	Previously grazed in the spring by first year calves.	Previously grazed in spring by cattle 'Clean' pasture grazed by parasite free calves.	Previously grazed by sheep in the spring. Previously been in conservation management or forage crops of arable by-products.

For those systems that use grazing as part of their management they can generally be split into three types: - those where cows predominantly calve in the spring, those who calve in the autumn, and those where calving occurs all year round. Generally in all systems, calves are removed from their dams either at birth or soon after birth.

System	Features/risks	Implications for control
<b>Spring calving herds</b>	Adult cattle usually immune but maybe sub-clinical production effects on high producing animals. Calves turned out in spring may experience infections from of over-wintering of worms and larvae on pasture and show clinical signs of infection. Calves grazing the same pasture as older calves and cows become exposed to high worm burdens from mid July onwards. Housed calves may acquire significant infection early in the next spring.	Monitor and treat if appropriate or considered necessary. Turnout calves on to low risk pastures and minimize pasture contamination using timed treatments with appropriate wormers. Use lungworm vaccination in high risk areas. Monitor using faecal egg counts and treat where necessary or move on to low risk pasture from mid July onwards. Turnout calves onto low risk pasture. Treat in early part of grazing season to minimise pasture contamination. Lungworm vaccination in high risk areas.
<b>All year round calving herds</b>	Calves born in the spring may be put on pasture at two to three months of age or as a year old the following spring. Calves born in late summer or autumn may not graze until the following spring.	Monitor using faecal egg counts and preventative control measures where necessary. Alternatively move to low or moderate risk pasture in the spring.
<b>Autumn calving herds</b>	Calves grazing the same pastures as older calves become exposed to higher worm burdens from mid July onwards.	Monitor using faecal egg counts and treat where necessary or move on to low risk pasture from mid July onwards. Treat for possible arrested worm development on housing in the autumn.

You can download the COWS report from the DairyCo website and a factsheet summarising the main points for farmer use is also available.

## Sign up for Grass updates!

This year you can get email updates on the latest grass figures coming into DairyCo's grass analysis farms across Great Britain alongside commentary from DairyCo's technical experts. Every fortnight grass growth, ME, CP, and DM figures for each farm will be updated and emailed out.

To sign up to receive the update email: [grass@dairyco.ahdb.org.uk](mailto:grass@dairyco.ahdb.org.uk) and write 'sign up' in the subject box.

**DairyCo**



■ Dr Elizabeth Berry

# Get serious about lameness

Owen Atkinson – Lambert Leonard and May Veterinary Practice.

**Tinkering with footbaths and foot trimming is all OK, but if you want to seriously tackle lameness, a whole farm step-wise approach is where it is at.**

For mastitis, we have the well-established 5-point plan, and sophisticated software for cell count analysis; for fertility, we have the regular routine vet-visits, but for lameness, what approach do farmers take?

Ignoring it as a problem is not an option. Consistently, research highlights that 25-30% of dairy cows in the UK are lame (DairyCo Mobility Score 2 or 3) on any one day. And yet, when I ask farmers to estimate how many lame cows they have, they always tell me “around 5 to 10%”. Either somebody somewhere has a huge amount of lame cows, or there is a lot of “owner blindness” going on! Yet this isn’t about pointing fingers of blame; it’s about looking for practical solutions for a common problem.

Lame cows are not good: they cost a lot of money (an estimated average of £330 for every case), they create a bad impression to our dairy-buying public, and they are depressing to work with. The cost isn’t as obvious as with mastitis, where milk has to be thrown away, or cell count penalties affect the milk cheque, but be in no doubt that lameness is costly. Lame cows produce less milk than their potential, they are more likely to get culled, they lose more weight and they are much harder to get back in calf. Even digital dermatitis – seemingly such a simple disease – reduces feed intakes and yield every day the cow is affected.

Nor is lameness a simple condition to understand. We talk about it as if it is a single disease, but of course it is merely a symptom of pain. That pain could be from digital dermatitis (essentially a skin infection), or from pus in the foot (usually as a result of a white line disorder), or from a sole ulcer, or from sole bruising. All of these conditions have very different causes and risk factors associated with them, and so to prevent them requires very different approaches. New science and understanding emerges all the time about foot conditions of the dairy cow. There are still many farmers who talk of “laminitis” and the effects of “too much protein” or “too much starch”, as if cows were the same as horses. And yet, current thinking would have other factors such as lying times (cubicle comfort), hormonal changes around calving, and the density of the digital cushion (fat

pad) as much more important factors influencing sole bruising (the condition which is commonly referred to as “laminitis”).

Most farms will have several reasons for lame cows. Typically, two thirds of all diagnosed lameness cases will be digital dermatitis, sole ulcers or sole bruising, but the ratio will vary from farm to farm. Knowing which lesions the farm has is a good starting point to know where to concentrate efforts. A thorough review of all the risk factors for that particular farm is invaluable, whether that be looking at the footbathing protocol, the walking surfaces, the cubicle dimensions, the length of time the cows wait for milking, or the foot trimming facilities and capabilities.

Ultimately, the best approach to tackling lameness is to have a plan. Not a hastily scribbled note which sits in the herd health folder, but a real, agreed, do-able, practical set of actions which – and this is the important bit – will deliver results. Devising such a plan is easier said than done. Everyone on the farm can influence lameness and so having everyone on board is important, including the hoof trimmer (if used). It is also important that the relevant people have the relevant skills: for example, how to trim the feet at drying-off, or how to treat a sole ulcer, or how to correctly handle the cows in the collection yard. It is important that everyone on the farm understands enough about the different causes of lameness so that they feel more confident about making the changes to reduce it.

Mobility scoring is a fantastic tool to measure what is going on and to see if the hoped-for improvements are actually happening. Without this type of measurement, to a large extent it will be guess-work. The other advantage of mobility scoring is to find the fresh lame cases to treat early: these will be far more successful than treating cows which have been lame for any length of time. Relying on spotting the obvious lame cows as they come in to the parlour is usually too late.

DairyCo have been developing a Healthy Feet Programme, which is designed to help dairy farmers reduce

their lameness by taking just this step-wise approach. Working in conjunction with a trained “mobility mentor” a farm team works towards developing and implementing their specific action plan, whilst developing new skills and understanding to tackle the problem. Experienced farm vets and suitably accredited hoof trimmers are invited to become trained as mobility mentors, using the experience gained from other programmes (national and international) which have demonstrated that lameness can be dramatically reduced this way. For many farmers, this might be a very different way of using their vet than the traditional “fixing things when they’re broke” approach, but it is an example of a more discerning use of veterinary spend which we are seeing all the time.

**The DairyCo Healthy Feet Programme four success factors for less lame cows:**

1. **Low infection pressure**
2. **Good horn quality and hoof shape**
3. **Low forces on the feet (good cow comfort and good cow flow)**
4. **Early detection and prompt, effective treatment of lame cows**

Watch out for the DairyCo Healthy Feet programme as it rolls out through the rest of this year. RADA are looking to use RDPE Skills programme Cheshire funding to support farmers working with the trained mobility mentors to get the programme and resultant improvements on to their farms.



**■ Owen Atkinson – Lambert Leonard and May Veterinary Practice**





## DairyCo Cheshire Update



■ James Hague - DairyCo Extension Officer.

There are now twelve DairyCo Discussion Groups meeting regularly in Cheshire, some with common interests such as grazing management or organic suppliers, others are a group of farmers within a geographic location all wanting to share ideas and information. The topics that have been looked at over the last couple of months include;

- **Dairy Markets, production forecasts and milk price forecasting**
- **Managing Turnout – balancing grass and keeping milk quality and quantity during the transition**
- **Carbon Foot printing**
- **Maximising your Milk Cheque – understanding your milk cheque statement – what is the buyer looking for?**
- **Grass agronomy**
- **Transition Cow Management**
- **Heifer Rearing**

Do some or all of these topics sound of interest to you? Would you like to be a member of a Discussion Group? Perhaps

you don't want to commit long term to a Discussion Group. If so, then perhaps a short term group that we call an Impact Group would suit you. With these, a group of farmers meet to discuss one topic and drill right down into the area to really get to grips with it over a short series of meetings. If any of these groups are of interest or you have some ideas for Open Meetings please contact James Hague on 07792 289 386.

**Coming up over the next few months in Cheshire:**

- **Jo Speed from DairyCo will be looking at the value of mobility scoring and presenting findings from her Nuffield Scholarship "Lameness Prevention in Dairy Cows" on 14th June at Clive Hall, Winsford.**
- **What drives profit? This Open Meeting will look at the key drivers for a successful dairy business covering topics like; benchmarking, grassland management and health and welfare. More details to follow.**

# Environment Advice

## ARE YOU CROSS COMPLIANT?



For any farming business, it's important to operate on a solid foundation of good environmental management, even before you look at agri-environment schemes and other loftier targets. This bedrock is, of course, cross compliance. GAECs (Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions) and SMRs (Statutory Management Requirements), the two standards against which good management is measured, must be complied with in order to gain any CAP payments. It's fair to say then that cross compliance is both a keystone in the construction of a healthier environment, and a fundamental requirement for farm management.

Failing to comply of course means reductions in CAP payments such as the Single Farm Payment. This reduction can range from 3% for a minor or first time breach, to 100%, for intentional non-compliance. With RPA inspections getting harsher and more frequent (as well as with less notice – as little as a day in some cases) it's more important than ever to conform to the cross compliance standards. There is a lot to be lost from arguably trivial non-compliances.

### Common Failure Points

There are many things that payments can be lost over, but some are more common than others. For example, many cross compliance failures are related to cattle identification, with failures to report movements, births and deaths being the most frequent. Other common failure points are related to the use of plant protection products (PPPs). The Code of Practice for use of PPPs must be used, records of pesticide applications kept, products used according to their conditions of approval, and applications made by competent operators with correctly calibrated equipment. That may well have been an intensely boring sentence, but ignoring it

could prove very costly! Whatever kind of farmer you are, arable or livestock, upland or lowland, knowing how to comply is essential.

### How can we help?

If you need a hand getting your head around page upon page of EU law, sussing derogations and exemptions, or if you simply need confirmation that you're doing the right thing, FWAG can help. Our Environmental Health Check is a useful service designed to take away the headache of compliance and put you on the right track. A couple of hours with a FWAG adviser will culminate in the production of a simple action plan to follow, detailing points of non-compliance. And with that done, the undertaking of environmental stewardship might not seem such a lofty target after all.

### Gain the FWAG advantage...

As the UK's leading independent provider of environmental and conservation advice, the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) can help you make the most of the environmental assets of your land. FWAG services to farmers and land managers include help, advice and grant information on:

#### Species and landscape

- Applications to ELS & HLS environment schemes
- General and specialist habitat and species management advice and surveys
- Cross compliance guidance using the FWAG Environmental Health check

#### Farm resource efficiency

- Soil, manure and nutrient management advice and plans
- Nitrate vulnerable zones compliance using FWAG's unique NVZ Health check
- Water pollution risk assessment and prevention advice
- Water efficiency

### Energy and innovation

- Wood fuels and woodland management
- Renewable energy and energy efficiency assessments
- Carbon foot printing and mitigation
- Waste management recycling and minimisation

**Best environmental practice makes good business sense. FWAG understands the need to maximise environmental opportunities in order to achieve business outcomes and objectives.**

## Talk to FWAG today...

**Tel: 01270 627938 or email:**  
**Cheshire@FWAG.org.uk**  
**WWW.FWAG.ORG.UK**



■ Rachel Price – Farm Conservation Advisor, FWAG

# Market Monitor

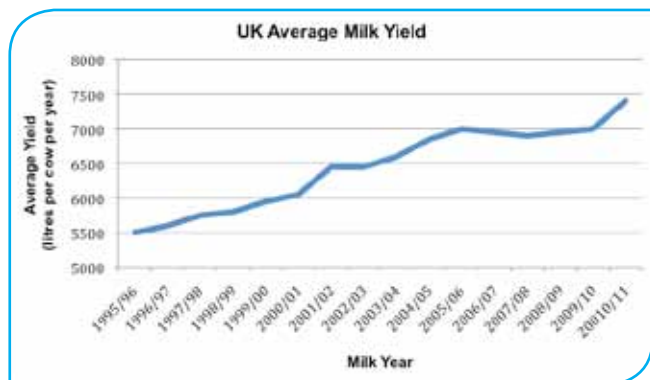
## DairyCo Datum.

### UK average milk yields up

Provisional figures from DEFRA show that the average milk yield in 2010/11 rose to 7,406 litres/cow – a 4.7% increase compared to the 2009/10 milk year. Following a relative plateau between 2005/06 and 2009/10, milk yields have since picked up, increasing by 331 litres/cow from 2009/10 levels. This was the second highest rise recorded since 1995/96, just below the 6.6% increase in 2001/02.

Although the total herd size of UK dairy cows fell in 2010/11 by 13,000 (0.7%) to 1.85 million over the year, the increased milk yield compensated for this loss and as a result total UK milk production for 2010/11 (including on farm use) increased by 519 million litres to 13.7 billion litres.

**In context:** Despite the poor start to the 2010/11 milk year due to poor weather, favourable milk production conditions prevailed for the rest of the year, resulting in a highly productive milk year. A combination of effective buffer feeding and good quality forage, together with breeding and management improvements will have contributed to efficiencies throughout the process and consequently farmers have been able to achieve more milk from fewer animals. Looking forward, the challenge of high feed costs and potentially adverse weather conditions could impede the maintenance of high milk yields and further increases in 2011/12.



### UK farmgate price bucks normal trend

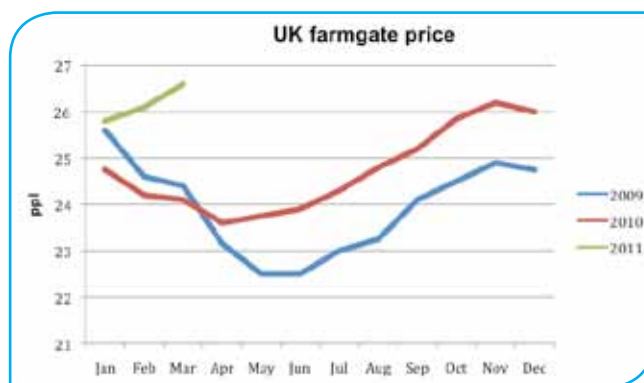
The UK average farmgate price increased by 0.49ppl (1.9%) to 26.57ppl between February and March. The change marks the highest recorded March UK farmgate price, and is only the second time that prices have risen between February and March in the last 10 years – prices would normally ease during this period on account of seasonality.

The unseasonal price increase is due to the high prices seen on World, European and UK wholesale markets. World butter, cheddar, SMP and WMP prices have been rising since August 2010 and although most eased between March and April, they remain considerably higher than a year ago. This has had a knock-on effect on the European and UK markets as imports have been become more expensive. UK SMP wholesale prices are 15.8% higher than they were a year ago, and prices of butter, cream and powders have been higher compared to year-earlier figures since the end of 2010.

Rabobank and the FAO both expect world demand growth to outstrip supply growth for the near term and the latest PTF market report

believes that UK wholesale prices will continue on an upward slope with little disruption in the coming months.

**In context:** It is possible that the March price increase is a delayed reaction to the high returns being made in the wholesale markets, with processors passing on to farmers some of the high returns seen previously. A forthcoming DairyCo report on price transmission aims to examine this trend in greater detail. Latest information suggests that the farmgate price may well continue to rise as the majority of contracts covered by the DairyCo milk price league table have announced price increases for April, whilst some have also done so for May.



### Farmer union calling for formula based milk contract

The NFU Scotland has issued a proposal which is calling for the baseline price in milk contracts to be based on a market related pricing formula. After some research and analysis of historic data, the producer working group has settled for a formula based on the market indicators of AMPE and MCVE, in a 20% and 80% split. This pricing mechanism "reflects real market indicators, and uses figures that are transparent and independently verifiable" according to the NFUS Vice President Allan Bowie. The NFU Scotland explained that this proposal aims at breaking the cycle of market failure in the supply chain and improving farmers' confidence. It also echoes the current EU proposals for stronger milk contracts with a transparent pricing mechanism. The union organised a series of meetings at the beginning of May for the proposal to be discussed with other farmers.

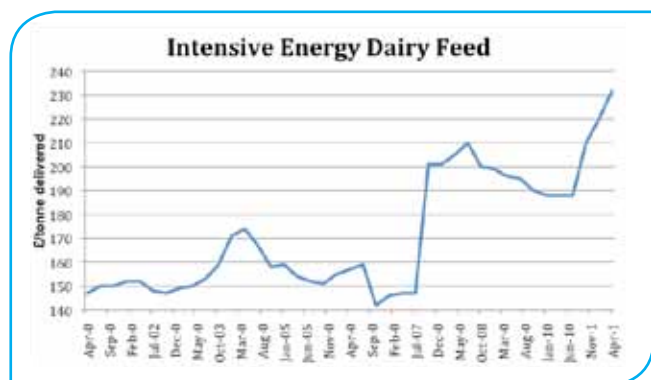
**In context:** Although there are already some contracts with a transparent pricing formula such as the Tesco contract, the majority of them don't have any. As a result, there has been a lot of debate over recent years about whether farmers were getting a fair return from the market place for their milk. If adopted, such a proposal would make sure that this would be the case, without damaging the competitiveness of the UK processors as the other European processors are facing the same market fundamentals. A market-related pricing formula would also enable farmers to understand how their price is set thus improving their confidence and enabling them to better adapt to the market situation. Support from other farmers and crucially from processors will be key for this proposal to have a chance of being implemented.



## Discounters' sales still rising

Since the start of 2011, Discounters (Aldi, Lidl & Netto) have led grocery market growth and in the 12-week period ending 17 April 2011; Aldi increased sales by 15% and Lidl by 14% compared to the same period last year. These increased sales have been fuelled by existing shoppers sharply increasing their spending levels. There has been an even stronger performance in the milk market with Hard Discounters increasing total milk sales by 21% in value terms and 29% in volume terms. Increased volume sales have been driven by semi skimmed (+31%) and whole (+48%) milk.

In context: Although Hard Discounters are growing quickly, they still represent a relatively small proportion of the liquid milk market: 5.2% in value terms and 6.6% in volume terms. However, with the current difficult economic situation, this share is likely to rise which means for farmers that a smaller proportion of milk might be sold from retailer aligned contracts.



## Non-domestic energy prices

Quarterly energy prices are supplied from DECC, dec.gov.uk.

### Electricity

Scale	Q3 2010 price (p/kWh)	Q4 2010 price (p/kWh)	Change (%)
Very Small	12.42	12.23	- 1.5
Small	10.18	9.99	- 1.9
Small/Medium	8.48	8.43	- 0.6
Medium	7.43	7.58	+ 1.3

Scale	Annual Consumption (MWh)
Very Small	0-20
Small	20-499
Small/Medium	500-1,999
Medium	2,000-1,9999

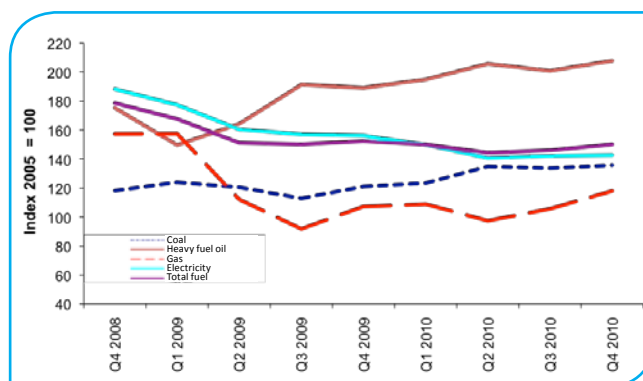
## Gas

Scale	Q3 2010 price (p/kWh)	Q4 2010 price (p/kWh)	Change (%)
Very Small	3.241	2.927	- 9.7
Small	2.273	2.218	- 2.4
Medium	1.743	1.948	+ 11.8

Scale	Annual Consumption (MWh)
Very Small	< 278
Small	279-2,777
Medium	2,778-27,777

Note: 1 MWh = 1,000 kWh = 1 unit

### Chart of Fuel Price Indices in Real Terms Q4 2008 to Q4 2010



### Brent Crude Oil

Month	Price (\$/barrel)	Change (%)
March	117	
April	123	+ 5.1

Brent crude oil is sourced from the North Sea and is used to price 2/3 of the world's internationally traded oil supplies. It is therefore a good indicator for future energy and commodity prices.

Note from the Editor: the RADA Newsletter will contain market information from other sectors in future editions...



A number of courses mentioned in this newsletter are funded through the RDPE Skills Programme which is supported by:



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