

Thoughts from a Northern Mart. February 2008

The Sun is Shining in Yorkshire.

The weather has improved at the time of writing with the Sun breaking through the fog and burning off the frost. The first signs of spring are starting to appear with lambs out in the fields, and this morning the sound of the woodpecker hard at work which could be heard as day light broke. Another more worrying sign was that land that for some years had hosted an outdoor pig unit had been cleared and last week was been ploughed, as the Pig herd continues to shrink, the plus point was how much the land had dried up from the floods of 2 weeks ago.

Foot & Mouth/ Blue Tongue.

Blood Testing for Blue Tongue is continuing to show up more infections and the livestock industry is continuing to hold its breath as the warmer weather approaches which will lead to midge activity and the risk of the spread of Blue Tongue, and the affect this could have on the already restricted movement of cattle and sheep, without the devastating economic affect that could come as mortality levels increase along with soaring cost of treatment.

Finance.

While enjoying a great British bacon buttie in a mart canteen the conversation among the farmers present soon turned to the rising cost of inputs. A farmer said it is just like those countries we hear about with hyper inflation farming in the UK at the moment, fertilizer going up every time you ask the price with the cost up over a 100% on last year, oil up, sprays up, on and on went the list. With the price of animal feed also singled out. There has been a very good increase in the price of beef and lamb but this very welcome increase will be eroded by the increase in inputs that are being experienced. The farmers who sold lambs in the autumn and pre Christmas period have of course not experienced this increase in prices. The pig industry is in a critical state with the contract price of pig meat being exactly the same as this time last year. Farmers have been told to constantly be better at marketing and to work closely with your market place, to this end a very large proportion of pig producers entered into cost plus contractors with the major processors where if say their cost of production was £1.05 they where paid 10p a kilo more giving them a margin and a profit. Now with the cost of production having risen to £ 1.25 + the processor that handles up to 50% of the UK pig market has torn up these cost + contracts, as one man said so much for planned marketing and production the supermarkets and processors are all greedy ##### with the only interest being their shareholders and profits

Despite all this the great Northern farmer is looking to the future as Spring approaches, this was probably best summed up by a conference held at Thrisk Auction Mart by Yorkshire Rural Support Network on succession planning, which once again shows the resilience of what we must stop becoming a rare breed, a British Farmer

RABI 01865 72 78 88 **F C N** 0845 367 9990 **ARC- Addington** 02476 690 587

Bob Baker

CRC, Rural Development Officer (Northern Dales)

Thirsk Rural Business Centre,

Blakey Lane

Thirsk,

YO7 3AB Tel: 01845 525757 **Mob:** 07968 171045

bob.baker@crc-online.org.uk