

## **Thoughts from a Northern Mart April 2010**

Many of the Farmers I spoke to around the end of March reminded me of the old saying that if March came in like a lamb it would go out like a lion, which it did with some pretty horrendous weather rain, snow and wind. The real high ground of the North is still in the grip of winter and will be for some weeks to come yet. Even down on the lowland turn out to grass for cattle is some time away for most Herds. Pressure on feed stocks which are already depleted following the hard weather of December and January. Planting is now getting under way but is generally about 2 weeks behind a normal year.

At Thirsk mart on the last Tuesday of March Greens farm health, in conjunction with the Auction mart company hosted a spring show, alongside the normal Tuesday store market. The good show of cattle met a brisk trade in a very crowded ring. Outside there was an excellent display of farm machinery with John Deere, Massey Ferguson, Valtra, McCormick and Fendt tractors as well as many other machines. Plus demonstrations on Electronic Sheep tagging and seminars on animal health issues as well as all the full range of products supplied by Greens, this event is a new way of the farmer seeing the latest products at an easily accessible free venue, the Mart is to be congratulated on this good use of their excellent premises .

The drive to greater efficiency of the various government departments by the increase in the use of IT is being greeted with some concern by the farming community with VAT now having to be done on line by a vast majority of business alongside the increasing encouragement to submit SFP applications on line . In the words of many farmers all well and good if you live under 3 miles from the exchange and can get a good broadband link, not many farms can get broadband. When a government official was tackled about this lack of broadband speed, the answer he gave that farmers could use libraries and their internet links to do their online transactions was met with great dissent. Is the library ready for the influx of Farmers queuing to do their transactions online?

Farmers and the rural population all around the north of England, watch as fuel prices march upwards with diesel in some of the more remote parts of north reaching £1. 29 a litre, fuel prices at these levels are causing great hardship as lots of people need cars to get to work and colleges etc. My youngest son who believes his dad is rapidly losing it will not believe that dad could buy 4 gallons of petrol for £1 when he owned his first car compared to the current price of approaching £6 a gallon. And yes the man with the red flag walking in front of the car was long gone. While the implications of the dramatic rise in fuel prices and fuel duty have hit the domestic budgets the effect on the budget for the soon to start silage season are again incredible with the modern forage harvesters using many hundreds of litres a day, all these costs will have to be carried by the farmer !

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