

Thoughts from a Northern Mart August 2010

Many farmers in the North are upset by the reports in the Media about the price of wheat and cereals going up as result of various climatic extremities around the world, and the supermarkets saying that because of this the price the farmers are getting. This came to ahead when a farmer's wife at a social event confided in me that she was upset with the supermarkets always blaming the producers and not their own greed for the price of food. They produce both milk eggs and Wheat. The milk is on contract with a supermarket, and is slightly improving in price but still a long way behind the levels of profit necessary to generate re investment. The eggs have just come down in price, paid by the processor. The wheat for bread making has been sold forward at a price far short of the current levels being discussed by the media. When wheat approached £200 a ton driven by the speculators and dealers who made thousands in minutes trading wheat, which the farmer had taken months to grow and store, the food industry said that the price of food would have to go up cover this rise in price. This was 3 years ago and the price of bread did not come down when wheat was £80 a ton last year. Yet again the food industry is saying that the price has to go up when wheat approaches £150 a ton, a strange world. It emerged that around 10-15% of the wheat grown in the UK was traded at the high prices and it is my guess that this will be a similar situation again this year.

A farmer who would not mind me saying is enjoying his autumn years, has sold stock through the Auction mart for over 60 years said you will never see anything like this again, on the Tuesday he had bought Shearlings (female sheep for breeding) for £110 apiece and sold geld ewes (female sheep past there useful breeding life) for £125 a piece on the Thursday. While he enjoyed the trade he said it again defied sense, and once again proved that there is nothing as queer as folk. The lamb trade has regained some of its previous price on the back of poor production in New Zealand, beef prices have also improved slightly. The cereal harvest is once again proving to be a difficult one with many showers interrupting the combines, or as one farmer told me a bachelor's harvest get it when you can. Yields are slightly down on average. Once again the speed of change in the countryside is rapid with many fields sown in short term forage crops and next year's oil seed rape, cereals will soon follow and so the cycle continues.

The rural community has been rocked once again by the news of another tragedy on a farm when a 4 year old boy was involved in a tragic accident on the family farm. While all our thoughts and prayers are with the family involved in this and other similar events we will have to be more careful on the farm.

The theft of farm machinery is a growing phenomenon with nearly every mart day, the talk of another theft goes the rounds. A Farmers wife has started a website called www.itsbeennicked.co.uk where the theft of machinery can be published and if you are offered machinery for sale you can check its origin or if you have had some stolen put it on the site.

The Country show season rolls on with many good shows still to come including Mukker, Stokesley and the last one of the season Nidderdale show at Pateley Bridge, these and many more shows continue to connect the countryside to the urban community.

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