

Thoughts from the South Pennines

Penistone show has now been and gone the end of a very good show season in Yorkshire. The passing of Penistone show always seems to mark the start of autumn, and the trees are certainly beginning to turn, as the last cuts of silage in the area are being brought in between the rain showers. It looks like both silage and straw will be tight this winter with straw making up to £75.00 a ton in the markets. With Barley now at £130.00 and wheat at £150.00 a ton it is continuing to squeeze the margins in the livestock industry. A recent article in the Guardian forecast a pint of beer could soon reach £4 due to the price of Barley and the impending VAT increase in January, a bigger issue though will be the effect on fuel prices especially for those in rural areas who don't have any option but to drive.

Store and Breeding sheep sales are now making a start and trade seems buoyant with Mule gimmer lambs averaging around £85 to £90 a head. Next Saturday the 25th of September sees Bretton mill Sheep fair one of the few in the area still held outside of a recognised market, this will include the society sale of the Whitefaced Woodland or Penistone sheep which is a native to the south Pennines. It is known as the Penistone Sheep as it had been sold through Penistone cattle Market since the 1600's now sadly gone and replaced by a TESCO store.

Last week saw the Consultation on Bovine TB and Badger control published. For many farmers who have lost their cattle Herds or suffered the financial implications of being placed on restrictions this may appear to have come far too late, but as TB keeps rearing its ugly head in Yorkshire cattle Herds it is good to see something is being done to look at controlling this devastating disease that costs British farming and the taxpayer Billions every year. It looks likely that a Badger cull will be introduced allowing farmers to cull badgers under certain conditions; this will undoubtedly lead to many debates and possibly court action from certain groups. Many farmers would say that culling is the only available option to control TB in cattle, and to control the disease in cattle we must also control it in the wildlife population.

This time of year is a time of change with the harvest having been brought in and straw and silage baled, we see fields being planted with the crops for next year's harvest, and thoughts are turning to getting winter housing ready for cattle. Some farms have now got their turkeys ready to fatten for Christmas, but with feed prices already £1.00 a bag up on last year I think we can expect to be paying a little more for our Christmas turkey this year.

This year Halifax church gained the status of Halifax Minster and as part of the celebrations a farming and food festival will take place there on the 9th of December. This is to become an annual event and will see a farmers market in the grounds of the Minster along with various entertainments throughout the afternoon followed by a carol service in the evening. Proceeds from the event are to be donated to the farming charities FCN, RABI and Addington, all of which do vital work in supporting farmers in Yorkshire and nationally.

It is good to see a farming and food festival in the middle of town and it can only be good to raise awareness of food and farming, it will be well worth attending if you can make it on the 9th of December.

Jonathan Charlesworth, Rural development Officer for the South Pennines, Churches Regional Commission

Email Jonathan.charlesworth@crc-online.org.uk

Tel 07595410707

