

Thoughts from a Northern Mart March 2010

The Snow is still hanging on the high ground with the very high ground still white over, and gullies and wall backs still full of snow to a low level. For the first 11 days of March even in the low land we have had frost every morning one morning down to -7. All this cold weather has left the grass growth a long way behind as is the crop growth with many of the crops still very prostrate in here growth patterns. The latten's of the spring can best be seen by the fact that Daffodils are late this year and at the time of writing these notes there are glorious shows of Snow drops and crocus, a welcome sight at this time of year.

Dairy farmers are experiencing a problem of what to do with the windfall of around £100 that is going to come to them from an EEC support scheme for milk producers. Not many are anticipating contacting their financial advisors on how to invest this sum. The cynical ones are wondering why bother with such small amounts of support and how much it will cost to deliver. Returns from milk still give cause for concern, although some farmers are thinking there is still a future in milk with a group of farmers and business men proposing to build 8000 cow unit in Norfolk which as well as producing milk would produce power from the animal waste. These sort of schemes are completing the thinking of sustainable integrated farming but are on a huge industrial scheme and give concern to some members of the farming industry.

Beef prices have slipped a little in the last few weeks but are still giving a small return, but here will have to be an adjustment in the price of store cattle if this dip continues there is not much evidence of store prices dropping yet. The lamb market is still very good but has just dropped a little in the last week or so with some of the wholesalers talking of a drop in demand following the showing of the BBC lambing watch programme for a week on BBC2. The trade for cull ewes still continues a pace.

Fodder levels while still adequate are getting used up with massive amounts going up the dale to the high ground most of which has been covered with snow or frozen since early December. A lot of silage was damaged by rabbits in the snow, these hungry rabbits chewed through the black plastic to get to the silage, and in doing so let in air which has damaged the silage and if it could not be used up quickly is now ruined. This has led to further demands on a dwindling stock. The rabbit population has suffered a drop in numbers following the hard weather, the rabbits also driven by hunger damaged a lot of trees and hedges by nibbling off the bark all the way round so killing the trees.

Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institute, farming oldest charity is celebrating its 150th year since it was founded, already a service of celebration has been held in West Minster Abbey. A whole range of events are planned country wide ranging from tea parties to dinner dances, concerts by the singing farmers and a harvest festival in York Minster. Here in the north of England details can be obtained from: -

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