

Thoughts from a Northern Mart May 2010

The election has finally been decided and the first coalition government for 70 years is now in place and hopefully will continue for the planned 5 years until the next election, thus giving the country a chance to get back on its feet financially. Although the last coalition was in wartime and food was desperately short with rationing it would be good if British agriculture could be held in as high respect by the new government as it was in the last coalition Government. Farmers around the auction ring are saying one step to help to restore farmer's confidence would be a good old fashioned dedicated minister of agriculture and food.

The dairy sector are welcoming the small increase in prices while not as much as they would have liked they are moving in the right direction for a change, and the milk price is edging back to one that will give a reasonable return. This will allow re-investment and modernisation. This has come too late for a lot of the farmers who have gone out of milk but will help those who have been able to remain in the industry. This reversal of fortune for those who can weather the storm is no where better illustrated than by the pig industry who on a whole have enjoyed one of the best years for the past 20 years and the pig herd is now expanding after years of contraction. Another sector of the industry which seems to be expanding is the poultry industry with new units going up all over the countryside, it is hoped that they don't overdo the expansion and create a surplus of eggs for the market.

Lambs are meeting a good trade which is following on from the good hogg trade which is coming to an end, one interesting fact is that a lot of the running hogs which had been bought for sale as next year's breeding sheep have been killed for the buoyant sheep meat market. Prime beef prices have eased in the market place but the price of store cattle remain very strong this imbalance is giving some cause for concern over future profitability.

It is often said that farmers are never satisfied with the weather, and the current spell of generally dry cold weather we have experienced in late April and early May, while the dry conditions have been welcomed, a nice warm gentle rain would do a lot of good if this warm rain came now you would be able to hear the grass growing and see the cereals and root crops grow.

The deadline of submission of Single Farm Payment applications has been extended to the 17th of May as the RPA does not work over the weekend, it is seen as ironic that if forms are not submitted on time a very aggressive scheme of penalty comes into play, while it does not matter how long it takes for the RPA the farmers lose out. There are still quite a few of last year's claims to be settled from last year and a few from the previous scheme years.

The Agricultural shows are getting under way this month with here in the north Otley show, where all manner of good livestock will be on display and show farming off to its best advantage. For those who want to see Swaledale sheep at their best in a very unique setting there can be no better place to be on a good day than at Tan hill sheep show, held at Tan hill pub the highest pub in Yorkshire. On a bad day the wind and rain coming in from Durham and Cumbria make this show one for the purist!

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