

Spring drought, then rain and rain and **more** rain! We really were getting concerned towards the end of April as the grass was hardly growing due to drought and the cracks were widening in our clay loam soils. However, it stopped raining briefly so we could make some silage in early June, but since then it has hardly stopped. A lot of you have been asking you how the weather has affected us so that is the main theme of this issue.

But first; **Farm Sunday, June 10th**. After the rush to silage, to give us a car park, (2 days before the event), Farm Sunday was a great success. We had over 100 visitors who enjoyed our nature trail or came on the farm walks and many brought along a picnic. Thanks to Richard Winspear of the RSPB, who gave us some fantastic support, my helpers and Sue James who took some great pictures. The birders amongst you spotted over 40 species of bird on the day. We also raised over £130 for Wyfordby Church Roof Appeal - thank you!



Farm Sunday photos: Sue James, www.sooshine.com



Wet, wet, wet.

Our wheat crops are still standing, with only a few small patches of lodged crop, where the wind and rain has knocked it over. With a good spell of dry weather, it should be ready for harvest; many neighbouring farmers have already taken their oil seed rape and barley between the downpours. Straw is likely to be in short supply and expensive.

Quality of first cut silage will not be brilliant, but there was a good yield. Since then the constant rain has kept the grass growing well - in contrast with last summer - but the conditions underfoot are bad, particularly where the dairy cows are coming and going through gateways and around water troughs. To try and protect the grazing a little and to keep the cows in from the worst weather, we have kept the milking herd in for about 50% of the time at nights for the last month now, which means we are using up conserved forage and straw and we

are still partially in the winter routine of feeding, cleaning and bedding down, with more manure to spread in the longer term. Our milk yield is holding up well, but nationally, production has plummeted. This, in conjunction with rising demand for dairy commodities on world markets, is leading to rapid price increases which are very slowly filtering back to producers. Our contract price will have risen by 1ppl by 1st August to around 19ppl - but the spot milk price has been up to 30 ppl. There are no butter or skim milk powder mountains in the EU any more so high prices are here to stay for a while. In the short term, extra income from increased prices will be taken up by additional costs - as well as the expense of keeping cows in, fertiliser prices have increased sharply and feed prices have also risen due to grain shortages worldwide. We start calving in August but have not yet been able to cut any hay or big bale silage on the ridge and furrow land and second cut clamp silage is also ready for mowing so will need some fresh grazing soon for the newly-calved cows once we start.

Sheep have been moved several times off the field upstream of the flood defence, which has been used this summer, with levels peaking at round 10 feet of water being held back to protect Melton. Fields downstream have been partially flooded, and several inundations of mud, although boosting longer term fertility of the soil, do nothing for short-term palatability of the grazing. Youngstock and beef cattle have been mooching amongst the shallow water to try and find better quality forage.

Below and bottom right...upstream of the flood control structure.... there is a fence and a gatepost down there somewhere too...



Dairy heifers and beef cattle in the flooded water meadows downstream of the flood defences.



We are planning the next batch of lamb and beef deliveries for August and September, so please remember to give us a ring or drop us an email to secure your order.

Best wishes, Julia Hawley