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AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER

Spring 2004, apart from the weather and the price of fertiliser, is very similar in feel to Spring 2003. A high demand for grasskeep is coupled with extremely buoyant store cattle prices and Spring lamb are in demand.

What will Spring 2005 bring I wonder? All the usual pundits are offering reasoned arguments for this and that but like the weather, the long range forecast is very difficult for one to get right. That should not be a reason for doing nothing and waiting to see what happens. The cross compliance consultation gives us plenty of clues as to the climate farmers will be operating within. I still get asked "will we have to keep animals in order to claim the Single Farm Payment?" No is the answer. From reading the Defra document on cross compliance in some circumstances all that is required is a topping once every five years, to allow agricultural production to resume within a twelve-month timescale.

The main requirement is to comply with the wide range of directives that apply to farm businesses:

- Waste management
- Nitrogen Vulnerable Zones
- Health and Safety
- Soil Management
- Water Management
- Animal Welfare
- Etc. etc.

So what should farmers be doing now? I would suggest look at your farm and determine if there are areas that need improving. For example do you out winter a bunch of heifers, which leads to poaching? This could mean that you do not comply with soil management recommendations. What can you do?

- Add an extra bay to a shed to in winter them?
- Cut numbers so as to have enough housing space?
- Change calving dates?

All these are options but until you have a firm idea what you want to do with your business you cannot make the right decision. So what should you be doing on your farm. The first stage is to determine which are the most profitable activities that can take place on your farm. As a generalisation, it is my view that production will move to the areas that are most suitable. In the south west the best thing that we can do is grow grass and therefore our production systems are likely to be centred around utilisation of grass i.e. beef, lamb and dairy. It is likely that the acreage of cereals will fall under the Single Farm Payment system.

Agri-BIP is currently working with many farmers who are looking at their farming businesses to determine which is the best route to go. Start using benchmarking and business planning techniques to make reasoned judgements as to the breakeven price for various farm enterprises. With this knowledge it is then possible to plan. It may be that all you need to bring the business up to scratch is some training just to make sure that everybody has the right ticket with regards to health and safety. So whether it is business planning or ATV training, Agri-BIP is here to help so give us a call and we will help you plan your way to 2005.

A New Range of Course available during 2004 – 2005

Agri-BIP working in partnership with Lantra SCC are able to offer a whole range of free training courses over the next 18 months.

These courses include: -

- ❑ Project management
- ❑ Sales, marketing and promotion
- ❑ VAT, Taxation, and legal
- ❑ Personal effectiveness
- ❑ Telephone techniques
- ❑ Stress management
- ❑ Health & Safety, Risk Assessment
- ❑ First Aid
- ❑ Food Hygiene

The numbers are limited for these courses; therefore it is important that you contact Tim Drew as soon as possible. Tim will then be able to register your interest and sign you onto the programme.

Within this programme, we are also able to train, register and certificate new trainers. So if you are interested in becoming a trainer, again contact Tim Drew in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872**.

Computers where to begin?

Jon Eggins our Training Co-ordinator and IT trainer has produced an information and training pack, about Computers, Software and the Internet. If you do not have one included with this newsletter then call the office and we will happily send you one out.

As computers become more important in business, the need to be able to use them is becoming ever more important. We are continuing to offer a wide range of training. We are now able to deliver courses in our training room at Okehampton on a whole range of areas including: -

- ❑ Spreadsheets
- ❑ Word processing
- ❑ Internet
- ❑ E-mail
- ❑ Database
- ❑ Desk top publishing
- ❑ Sage

If you are interested please call the office and speak to Tim Drew or Jon Eggins.

Employment Regulation – Dispute Resolution

In October of this year laws relating to the resolution of disputes between employers and employees which were introduced in the Employment Act of 2002 will be fully implemented.

From October 2004 employers and employees will be required to follow a minimum three stage process to ensure that disputes are discussed at work. A similar three part structure will apply for both Disciplinary and Grievance matters.

Process will be as follows: -

- Write a letter explaining the issue
- Have a meeting to discuss the issue
- Have an appeal meeting if required

These are expected to be the minimum standards which must be met by all UK employers.

One of the more important aspects of this legislation is that rights and responsibilities are applicable for both employers and employees. Employees will not be able to make claims to Employment Tribunals about grievances unless they have been previously raised through the formal grievance process at work.

Further guidance will be available through an updated *Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures* as produced by ACAS. ACAS can be contacted through the national helpline number – **0845 747 474 7**.

Claiming the Dairy Premium 2004

As a result of the CAP Mid Term Review, from 2004 onwards, dairy farmers will be eligible to submit a claim for a dairy premium. This premium will be paid on milk quota from 2004. In order to receive the dairy premium this year a 2004 IACS application **must** be submitted. The deadline for submission of IACS applications for this year is Monday 17th May.

Funding for Vocational Training Courses

75% funding - Training Sourced - Event Organised
Available across the region for all farmers

Over the recent months Agri-BIP have been able to fund a large number of vocational courses, from Foot Trimming to ATV and AI to Fencing. This particular funding stream will no longer be available after the end of May, but we will have access to other funding.

So if you as an individual, a business, or a group have a specific training need, we will be able to source the training, organise the event and best of all obtain funding for up to 75% of the total cost.

This funding is not only available within the Objective 2 area (as was before) but now across the whole region.

Call Tim Drew in the office to talk through your needs.

DISCLAIMER

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