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AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER

CAN YOU HAVE TOO MUCH INFORMATION?

I often ask myself this when wading through emails, magazines, Defra communications, websites, etc. etc. in an effort to make sure that I keep up-to-date with all the issues that affect our clients. This enables us to put critical deadlines and information in the Agri-BIP Newsletter. For example, you will remember last month's article re the withdrawal of BSPS Claims, which I have repeated in this newsletter. A number of clients have contacted me to tell me that they have gained up to £1,200 by following the guidance in the article.

We generally have a very positive response to the newsletter, which now circulates to almost 3,500 farmers in the South West. This growth in circulation has given us a headache in that it is becoming difficult to produce, photocopy and mail the newsletter each month, leaving aside the cost.

As with all things in life you have to try and make things easier and where possible, using technology to assist you with that. We intend to change the method of distribution of the newsletter from postal distribution to email and fax distribution. There are a number of benefits in this change. Firstly, you will receive the newsletter on the 30th of each month, which will ensure that the information contained within it is not out of date when it arrives, which given our current system, sometimes has been the case. That will not happen with the new system. It will also save a significant amount of money that we can then use to put on other activities for you our clients. Finally, it will also allow us to send out important updates more frequently if circumstances require it. You will find inserted in this newsletter a separate sheet, which I would ask you to return as soon as possible to ensure that you receive next month's newsletter under the new system. Please indicate which version of the newsletter you would like, email or fax and complete as much of the remainder of the document as you feel appropriate.

We will continue to send a few newsletters by post to people who do not have access to email or a fax machine, however we cannot guarantee that this can happen each month and it will depend on the number of requests. I would like to thank you in advance for your co-operation in this matter and to assure you that this is about maintaining and improving our service to you in the future.

Stewart Horne

Free Marketing Workshops

Tuesday 5th July – 10 – 1 pm – West Devon BIP, Okehampton – Telephone Techniques Workshop
Wednesday 6th July – 7pm – Dupath Well, Callington – Marketing Woodland Products.

For more information and to book yourself a place on these workshops please contact us in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872**

Wild about Trees



With the help of hundreds of volunteers, Dartmoor-based charity **Moor Trees** plants thousands of trees each year - all for the love of beautiful, wild, oak woodlands. There's precious little left of our ancient woodlands, what remains are wonderful oases for rare plants and animals. Native woodlands are home to flowers like the yellow archangel, the rare Blue Ground Beetle, and several rare species of bat, as well as some very special birds such as the lesser-spotted woodpecker.

Based on Dartmoor, Moor Trees works with local volunteers and landowners, to create new woods for our hard-pressed wildlife. Landowners can take advantage of a free service from Moor Trees to help people create their own new "ancient" woodland.

"We provide trees, volunteers and help with obtaining grants, all designed to make it hassle free and inexpensive" says Adam Griffin, Wildwoods Service Coordinator at Moor Trees. "People love to come out and help, just knowing they are doing something positive for their local environment, and what could be more positive than planting more trees!"

"We grow all our trees from locally-gathered seed in our community tree nurseries around the National Park. That way the trees we plant have a great chance of survival, as they're already genetically adapted to the local environment. Landowners, for whom we create schemes, are very pleased at the high quality of the planting and how well it blends into the landscape. That is where our secret lies."

"By planting locally native species in random patterns, we imitate how nature would naturally go about expanding her woodlands. This helps the trees establish more quickly and the results are amazing. We have a 99% success rate".

So, if you would you like to leave a legacy for generations to come, a wildlife jewel that benefits everyone, please contact Moor Trees and you, too, could be helping our wildwoods to return.

For information about Moor Trees and their free Wildwoods Service go to www.moortrees.org, email info@moortres.org or phone us on 0845 456 9803 (local rate)

Computer Training for Farmers For Beginners & Intermediate Levels

USING A COMPUTER	1 day
INTERNET & EMAIL	2 days
WORD PROCESSING	2 days
SPREADSHEETS	2 days

If you are interested in any of these IT courses we have dates planned during July and will be available at Okehampton, Bovey Tracey and North Devon.

Participants in the above will be offered a third day which will cover the application of IT to practical farming situations, these will include the use of the British Cattle Movement Service website, preparation of Soil Management Plans, Manure Management, Cash Flow templates and many more.

For further information and to book courses please call Jo Walton on
Freephone 0800 592 872

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Well if we thought that the SP5 forms were not well managed by the RPA they have exceeded themselves with the Environmental Stewardship Programme. Firstly, for those of you who were waiting to do an on-line application, it appears highly unlikely that this will be available this year due to problems they are having with the system. Therefore, if you wish to make an application for Environmental Stewardship you need to do so manually. However, this process is not without its problems. Many thousands of farmers I am sure must be frustrated with the difficulties they are having in receiving a correct application pack. The whole mapping system seems to fall over at the slightest breeze.

The good news is that the Rural Development Service have just announced that ELS and OELS application forms will now be accepted on a monthly basis with the agreement starting one month on .

If you haven't started to consider ELS or OELS we continue to run **Environmental Stewardship Awareness Workshops** for people who want to get a bit more information before sending off for an application pack or for those who are unsure whether to proceed with an application. The feedback from current workshops is that most people having learnt more about the scheme are intending to make an application, however the difficulties with maps preclude a quick conclusion to that process.

For those of you who do finally manage to get your application pack in the right order we are now running **Application Training Workshops**. These are run in a number of locations in the region with between 4 and 6 participants at each workshop and we go through the whole process of making an application to ensure that you have considered all the things you should before finalising your application.

Attendees have said they found the time very worthwhile. It demonstrated that it was possible to put together an application which met the rules of the scheme that suited their individual farms. Putting all the hedges into hedgerow options which was often their first thought, but a combination of options was often preferable.

If you would like to attend an Awareness Workshop or an Application Workshop give us a call. You will find dates and venues elsewhere in this newsletter.

One of the many popular options that people are considering for their ELS or OELS application are Soil, Nutrient, and Waste Management Plans. These do not have to be completed at the time of application but must be drawn up during the first year of your agreement with the Rural Development Service.

To that end, later in the year we will be running workshops on Management Plans to help you to comply with the requirements of the scheme. The Soil Management Plan for example will enable you to comply with both cross compliance next year and your Entry Level Agreement.

Environmental Stewardship Scheme

If you are undecided about making an application, want to know more about the schemes and how they would fit your farm and business, we are running a number of workshops across the region during the evenings.

These meetings are scheduled for 7.30pm.

06.07.05 – Axewater Equestrian Centre, Kilmington

12.07.05 – Dupath Well Farm, Callington

14.07.05 – The George Hotel, South Molton

18.07.05 – Agriculture House, Truro

19.07.05 – Exford (venue to be arranged)

26.07.05 – The Crown & Sceptre, Holsworthy

28.07.05 – The Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Following these are small workshops to assist people putting together applications. We will help with the completion of the forms and maps.

These meetings are scheduled for 11.30 am.

01.07.05 - Eagle House, Launceston

05.07.05 – White Hart, Modbury

14.07.05 – The Crown & Sceptre, Holsworthy

20.07.05 – WDBIP, Okehampton

26.07.05 - Barnstaple (Venue to be arranged)

28.07.05 – Dorchester (Venue to be arranged)

Funded by the South West of England Land Based Colleges VTS Programme, there is a small charge of £10 including VAT to attend.

New Activity, New Income?

Following a successful workshop for marketing farm produce we recognise many businesses are seeking new ways of increasing profits. To help prepare for these we can offer the following courses to you free of charge: -

- Using IT (email, internet, websites) to increase business profits through increased sales.
- Financial Systems for diversified businesses
- Regulations that apply to the preparation and sales of meat products.

To register your interest in attending any of these courses please contact us on

Freephone 0800 592872

Single Payment Scheme Update

With the last of the applications submitted, the RPA will be entering the information into the new computer systems. Farmers will be thinking that's it out of the way, sit back and wait for the cheques to arrive sometime in 2006! However, there are further details that continue to emerge that will affect farming businesses over the next few months. Firstly, cross compliance inspections have started, I have been informed; an inspector has arrived on farm with a measuring wheel and has spent all day cross checking the SP5 claim - be aware.

Secondly, no one can have missed the debate (ROW) over agricultural budgets following the French and Dutch NO to the European Constitution. Undoubtedly this is a deliberate attempt by the French to forget their own problems and make the UK the villains once again. I'm not too concerned that major changes in the agricultural support will happen in the near future but it does show how vulnerable the land-based sector is to political problems.

The EU commission has recently indicated that even without further reform the agricultural budget is under pressure. It anticipates that 4% will need to be taken off the Single Payment Scheme budget in 2007. This financial discipline reduction is earlier and larger than expected, and coupled with modulation of at least 10% will mean 14-15% will come off cheques in 2007. This will increase each year thereafter and some commentators are predicting 25-30% reductions in 2012.

If you will need to reassess your farming activity to cope with these changes, the earlier it is done the better, the historical element of the SPS will be eroded very quickly and delaying change will increase the pressure on your finances, if you want Agri-BIP assistance gives us a call.

Small Producers Avoid Scale Backs

Eblex have reported that smaller producers should note that those claiming on 30 animals or less do not receive any scale backs under BSPS. Scale backs also apply to associate Extensification Payments.

Because of the large-scale backs last year, it may be worth some producers withdrawing animals to bring them down to the 30 animal small producer threshold. The table below shows that there is a benefit up to 42 animals. The benefit is obviously higher where you just exceed the threshold:

Animals claimed on before scale backs	Animals paid on after scale backs
30	30
32	22.5
35	24.6
40	28.1
42	29.5

Under the scheme rules it is possible to withdraw a claim or individual animals from claims at any time so long as:

- You have not been notified of any irregularities to the animals you wish to withdraw,
- The RPA has not notified you of an inspection, which subsequently reveals irregularities.

To withdraw animals you must notify the RPA in writing. It appears there is no deadline in which to do so. It is not too late even if you have already received your scaled back balance BSP and EPS; you will receive a further top up.

30 claims or less do not receive scale backs. Scale backs @ 29.74%

DISCLAIMER

Every effort has been taken to ensure the information contained in these notes is correct, however, West Devon Business Information Point will not be liable for any loss arising from the use of these notes or any omissions or errors contained within.

Sponsored by Learning and Skills Council, The European Social Fund, Business Link, West Devon Borough Council, Dartmoor National Park Authority, and Lantra.