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AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER

How is your farm business looking at the beginning of 2006?

If it is anything like mine, it is about time that the Single Farm Payment arrived (see article on SFP Update).

What New Year's Resolutions have you made?

Why not set some for your business?

The following list would be ones that all farmers should examine: -

- Firstly, have you applied for the Environment Stewardship programmes, if not why not? A minimum of £12 per acre per year is available and waiting for you and your application. Don't forget that it is all **profit!**
- If you are a sheep farmer, have you submitted your "annual inventory" of sheep numbers to Defra by the required date of the 1st February 2006? If not, this could mean a potential cross compliance breach.
- How are the rest of your records looking? Are you up-to-date with cross compliance? Inspections are taking place at 1 hour's notice, you will not have long to get them right and this is one of the most common causes of failures which in a large number of cases has led to either warning letters or a minimum 1% taken off the Single Farm Payment.
- Cattle Farmers – what is your replacement tag situation? How many animals do you have with only one tag – you have ordered replacements but they are still sat in the kitchen drawer or in your workshop? You need to get the tags into the cattle, as this also is a common cause of cross compliance failures.
- Have you looked at the Soil Protection Review, which arrived, as predicted just before Christmas – have you opened the envelope at all or have you just opened it then closed it again? Whilst the Soil Protection Review does not need to be completed until the latest at the end of August, you know how busy you will get once the spring and summer arrives and you are quite likely to not find the time to do it. Open the envelope and have a good look and get this form completed. It is a requirement for all Single Farm Payment applicants this year. Agri – BIP soil management workshops cover the review in both the theory and practical elements and include an on farm session with a spade!

With all the above points dealt with, now you can actually start to think about your farming systems. Does your existing system make a profit, if not why not. Are there any changes which you could make to bring it into profit, if the answer is no, you must then question why you are actually doing all that work just to produce something at a loss.

Agri-BIP is here to help you ensure that you keep your New Year's Resolutions, so if you need any help with the subjects mentioned above or if you could do with some extra information or assistance, then please either book onto the relevant workshops or if there is not one in your area, give us a call and we will be able to put one on closer to you. If you need any one to one assistance, again, give us a call and we will see what we can do.

It is fairly clear that with all things being equal, the next few years may well be a struggle without making positive actions within our businesses, so don't delay, make some positive steps for your farm business today.

Stewart Horne
Manager

Lift those January spirits with some positive action!

Apparently, 23rd January is the most depressing day of the year. Whether or not that's the case, the wait for spring can seem like a bit of a long haul this time of year. Nothing lifts the spirits more than some positive action particular when it comes to business.

“Up Close and Personal” is a new Agri-BIP workshop that takes a practical and honest look at “marketing your farm, your produce and yourself direct to the public.”

The first workshop is going to be held on the 28th February at the Honiton Business Centre, East Devon, starting at 1.30 – 4.30 pm.

It's open to anyone farming in East Devon who is looking at direct marketing as a means of increasing farm income. This workshop is not just for those thinking of selling produce direct – it applies to every form of diversified farm enterprise and will include discussion about the pro's and con's of value added activities for farm businesses.

It's sure to give you food for thought and help you look at all options for improving the return from your farm.

And another cheering thought; it's free to all participants. However, you'll need to ring the office to book your place as the numbers we can take are limited.

Call the office on **Freephone 0800 592 872**

This workshop is supported by East Devon AONB Sustainable Development Fund.

Computer Courses

As time goes on the need to use computers in our businesses increases. The record keeping that is now required, together with fast communications by way of e-mail make computers almost as necessary as a tractor. Defra's “Whole farm appraisal” will make management of regulations easier, but it will require a computer and Internet access. If you are yet to embrace computers then our new basic computer workshops is one that you should not miss.

The first element of the workshop covers purchasing a computer; where to do it, what to look for, what type of specification should I have for a business computer, for a personal computer for the family or for an all singing, all dancing games, DVD, television, entertainment centre computer. Should I purchase by mail order or go to the local computer shop, or go to Exeter or Plymouth and buy from one of the warehouses there. The advantages and disadvantages of all will be discussed. Did you know that you can buy a brand new computer all set up to use the internet for less than 2 tonnes of fertiliser?

The second element of the workshop will take the raw beginner through the basics of using a keyboard, using a mouse, switching the computer on and off and some very basic demonstrations of what computers can be used for to make record keeping simpler in the future. So if you are yet to “dip your toe into the computing water” this is the workshop for you. No jargon just very basic instruction for people with zero knowledge.

This course will be held on Tuesday **21st February at WDBIP in Okehampton, starting at 11.30am.**

For more information or to book a place on this course, contact us in the office on

Freephone 0800 592872



Events Page

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, and want assistance in putting together applications, we are running a number of workshops across the region. We will help with the completion of the forms, maps and points calculation. These workshops start at 11.30am.

ELS Awareness and Form Filling Workshop

Wednesday 8th February – Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Other workshops which are taking place during February and early March: -

Soil Management Planning Workshops – practical sessions – 11.30am – 3.30pm

Tuesday 7th February – Axewater Equestrian Centre, Kilmington

Friday 17th February – East Devon (Venue to be confirmed)

Thursday 23rd February – Wiltshire (Venue to be confirmed)

Tuesday 28th February – Somerset (Venue to be confirmed)

Wednesday 1st March – The Old Coaching Inn, Queen Street, South Molton

Wednesday 8th March – Kingsbridge Buying Group (Venue to be confirmed)

Cross Compliance Workshop – 11.30am start

Thursday 16th February – The Crown & Sceptre, Holsworthy

Red Meat Marketing – 11.30am start

Thursday 2nd February – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Beef Profitability Workshop – 11.30am – 3.30pm

Thursday 9th February – Axewater Equestrian Centre, Kilmington

Bookkeeping for Farm Businesses – ‘First Steps to using computerised Systems’ – 11.30am start

Wednesday 22nd February – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Lloyds TSB Agricultural Event

Thursday 2nd March – Betty Cottles, Okehampton – 7.30pm start

Covering Entry Level Scheme issues with Agri-BIP, Taxation of Single Farm Payment with Simpkin Edwards Accountants, the Future for land Prices with a representative from Savills.

For more information and to book a place at this FREE evening event, please contact Nigel Pearce at the Okehampton branch of Lloyds TSB on 07725 068730

Computing for Beginners

Tuesday 21st February – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

NEW CLAiT DATES

Wednesday 1st February – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Wednesday 15th February – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Wednesday 1st March – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Thursday 16th February – The George Hotel, South Molton

Thursday 2nd February – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Thursday 9th February – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Thursday 2nd March – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield



Internet Marketing Workshops

Monday 6th February – Internet Marketing for on-farm products and services – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Wednesday 8th February – Internet Marketing for on-farm products and services – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

The majority of workshops require a small charge of £10 including VAT to attend.
For more information or to book a place on one of these workshops, please call the office on
Freephone 0800 592872

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

Many farmers now have agreements with the Rural Development Service for Environmental Entry Level and Organic Entry Level Stewardship. I continue to be surprised at the number of farmers yet to consider an application for Entry Level Stewardship given the ease of the application process and of the requirements of the scheme.

For many farmers the options are ones that do not impose any restrictions on farming activity and the majority of farmers have managed to get their points without putting **any of their hedges** into management options.

The Rural Development Service recently announced a new option "Maintenance of Traditional Farm Buildings" for which 2 points per square metre of ground floor area is available. We are awaiting details on that option but early discussions with the RDS have indicated that it may be possible for existing contracts to be amended if the farmer wishes to take advantage of this new option, which may suit some farmers better than ones they already opted for.

If your business is finding life difficult with the cash flow implications of the delayed Single Farm Payment for 2005 then please consider Environmental Stewardship. It is one way of bringing £12 per acre onto your farm for very little cost. Each month that you delay your application you are losing out on this possible income.

Our Entry Level Workshops cover both the basic information surrounding the scheme as well as an in depth guide in completing the application forms to the satisfaction of the Rural Development Service.

If you have yet to consider Environmental Stewardship just come along to one of these workshops to get good no nonsense practical advice on how these can fit on your farm. Very few people who have considered Environmental Stewardship have failed to make an application.

SINGLE FARM PAYMENT UPDATE

With February fast approaching it is anticipated that the Rural Payments Agency have predicted that payments for the Single Farm Payment will commence the authorities are remarkably quiet. I am sure that they are burning the midnight oil not to lose face on this one but I would predict that payments in March will probably need to be interim payments around the 60% level. Anything will be better than nothing. We have heard of a number of successful National Reserve applications within our clients. These and all other queries will need to be dealt with before the RPA can commit to the final value of entitlement.

The success rate on the National Reserve applicants has been higher than anticipated leaving some commentators to predict that the National Reserve modulation will need to be increased from the predicted 3%. At the moment it is looking like this may be doubled to 6%.

This will mean that the total deductions from the headline figure of Single Farm Payment will be in the region of 10-11% in 2005 payments. This is likely to be continued at a similar level in 2006 given the announcements that Defra made on modulation rates almost a year ago.

Newsletter Distribution

A big thank you to everyone who has responded to our request for email addresses and fax numbers over the last few months.

We would still like more so please keep them coming if you have not already responded.

You can email, fax or write to us at: -

E-mail: team@bipwestdevon.biz

Fax: 01837 659314

Address: West Devon Business Information Point, FREEPOST EX 1119, Okehampton, EX20 1YZ

Lloyds TSB Events

Workshops for Dairy Farmers

To discuss the opportunities and actions dairy businesses should take when opportunities arise to increase cow numbers and tender for additional land.

All workshops commence at 10.30am for 11.00am start – 2.30pm (including a light lunch)

Wednesday 15th February at Axewater Equestrian Centre, Hill Farm, Whitford Road, Kilmington

Tuesday 21st February at Glazebrook House Hotel, South Brent

Wednesday 1st March at the George Hotel, 1 Broad Street, South Molton

For more information and to book a place at one of these workshops, please contact Nigel Pearce at Lloyds TSB on 07725 068730

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.

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