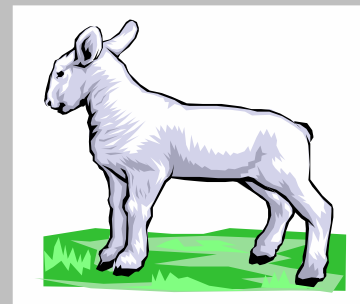


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# **AGRI-BIP NEWSLETTER**

## **BEEF AND SHEEP FARMERS ADJUSTING TO DE-COUPLING** **CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO CHANGE?**

The last 12 months have certainly been challenging times for cattle and sheep farmers. The pressure on prices of store and finished animals coupled with the subsidy reforms and the subsequent delay in receiving the Single Farm Payment are all factors that will have a significant impact upon beef and sheep farm profitability. It is inevitable that both of these industries will need to adapt in the environment over the next few years.

The most efficient suckler cow, cattle finishers and sheep breeding and finishing units can produce profits even when subsidies are removed from their performance figures. However, the vast majority of beef and sheep units tend to produce losses when the subsidy figures are taken out of the turnover calculations.

In order to look at how your farm production compared with the best can be carried out using data extracted from these high producing farms over the past couple of years. We can help you to carry out an analysis of your farm performance and see where and how you compare with the top performing herds and flocks. If you find it difficult to produce the required data, then we can also work with setting up a recording system. Your accounts and records can then be used to assist the management of the business, not just to prepare a set of accounts for the tax man.

Examples of the differences that can be highlighted include:

- Suckler herds – top producers produce calves which are over 60kgs heavier than the poorer producers. This happens despite the fact that very similar feed costs and very similar calf price in £'s per kg take place in both sections. It is the size of the calf that generates a massive difference in financial performance.
- English LFA suckler herds – again have significantly heavier calves (30kgs plus) achieved with lower feed costs per cow.
- Grazed cattle finishing – 20% higher daily live weight gain per calf and less concentrates used, more fertiliser used, far lower total feed and forage costs per calf producing huge differences in enterprise margin.
- Lowland sheep flocks – very similar feed and forage costs producing 20% more lamb sales per year.
- LFA sheep breeding flocks – double the output but very similar fixed costs.

All the above are examples where the top performers are gaining significant financial benefits. The change from direct headage payments such as Suckler Cow and Ewe Premium to the Single Farm Payment Scheme mean that you can now manage your enterprises responding to the market rather than taking into account subsidy income.

If you would be interested in the above or setting up a local set of comparison farms then please contact us on **Freephone 0800 592 872**.

**David Hinshelwood  
Agri-BIP Advisor**

## Marketing your products and services using the Internet

Are you exploiting new opportunities?

Exhibit in this global market place and boost your sales. Developing a website or enhancing your existing site enables you to increase visitor bookings, boost income and inform your customers of new products and services. Getting your product out there first, or being the quickest to react to changing market trends, can have a huge impact. Discussions with web designers can be fraught with misunderstandings and jargon!

Join our workshops and make a success of Internet Marketing by learning how to: -

- Understand technical terms of web design and publication
- Use internet marketing techniques and tips
- Search engine registration and linking
- Effectively use internet service providers

Consider new business opportunities, such as the following: -

- Monitor changes in your market – use e-mail or online questionnaires to gather feedback from customers on new features or services they might find useful.
- Research the internet to find new products that may improve your offering!
- Find out what your competitors are doing by looking at their websites and conducting online market research – Are they introducing any new services or special offers? How can you compete? Can you improve on their ideas?
- Setting up an e-commerce shop front – permanently open and capable of selling your goods into new markets around the world.

Join us on **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May at 11.00am – 3.00pm in East Devon (venue to be confirmed).**

A small charge of £10 inc VAT will be required to attend this workshop.

For more information or to book a place on this workshop, contact us in the office on  
**Freephone 0800 592872.**

### **REDUNDANT FARM BUILDINGS WANTED**

We have had requests from businesses that are looking to re-locate, with a possibility that the relocation could be into farm buildings.

- In North Devon or Torridge (as far west as Holsworthy) a furniture maker who is looking for approximately 1,500 square feet to rent with the possibility of a further 1,500 square feet in the future. Traditional stone buildings would be preferable but a redundant modern barn would be considered.
- We also have someone looking for 1,000 square feet of redundant farm building in the North Tawton area.
- The next request we had was for 1,500 square feet in the western end of the South Hams area between Ivybridge and Kingsbridge.

If any of these projects did come to fruition then conversion costs could be eligible for grant support under the Redundant Buildings Grant Scheme.

If you have buildings that may be suitable and are interested call David on **Freephone 0800 592872.**

### **SINGLE FARM PAYMENT**

Those of you who have received payments congratulations.

To those of you who are still waiting payment commiserations – but at least you have the consolation of knowing that you are not on your own.

You should by now have received your Entitlement Statement. I would recommend that you check the statement for its accuracy. We have come across numerous farmers who have errors on the statement including the following:

- An error in the amount of land allocated
- Errors in the classification of land which has been allocated (i.e. lowland rather than SDA or vice versa etc.).
- Have too low a value on their Entitlement reflecting an error in the allocation of the historic element.

If any of the above or other errors are shown in your Entitlement Statement then you should write to Defra (Newcastle Upon Tyne) and draw to their attention the reasons why you believe the statement is wrong.

## 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. All workshops start at 11.30am.

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April – West Devon Business Information Point, Okehampton

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April – Axewater Equestrian Centre, Kilmington

### Cross Compliance and Form Filling

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April – The Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May – West Devon Business Information Point, Okehampton

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May – The Crown & Sceptre, Holsworthy

### Soil Management Planning

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April – Wiveliscombe Community Rooms, Wiveliscombe, Taunton

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April – Cheddar area (*venue to be confirmed*)

Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April – The Crown and Sceptre, Holsworthy

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April – The Dartmoor Lodge, Ashburton

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May – Axewater Equestrian Centre, Kilmington

### Easy Care Sheep workshop with John Vipond

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April – West Devon BIP, Okehampton – 1.00pm

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April – West Dorset (*venue to be confirmed*) – 10.00am



### Marketing your Products and Services using the Internet

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May – East Devon (*venue to be confirmed*) - 11.00am – 3.00pm

### Computer Training

These workshops are ideal for beginners through to intermediate, and offer you a choice of topics such as Internet & Email, Managing Files, Spreadsheets, Web Page Creation, Database and Publisher with individual support from our in-house tutor.

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April – The George Hotel, South Molton

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April – West Devon BIP, Okehampton

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April – Teignbridge Business Centre, Heathfield

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May – The George Hotel, South Molton



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**

### CROSS COMPLIANCE THOUGHTS

You will be aware that there are many aspects to the cross compliance requirements for Single Farm Payment Scheme. We have repeatedly talked about the necessity to ensure that livestock records, cattle tags, sheep tag, movement records, etc. must be up to date and accurate to ensure that you do not breach cross compliance. Don't forget that Nitrogen Vulnerable Zone records need to be accurate and up-to-date as well.

The new application form asks you to declare the Cross Compliance conditions that apply to your form.

We shall be holding workshops to look at completing the application form and Cross Compliance conditions. See the Events Page for details of dates and courses.

### FOOD HYGIENE LEGISLATION – Bed and Breakfast and other rural businesses handling food

From the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2006 a number of new Food Hygiene regulations apply in the UK. Most of the requirements of these regulations are the same as the ones they replace, however the main new requirement is that you must be able to show what you do to make or sell food that is safe to eat and have this written down. This means that you must put in place “a written food safety management system” based on the principles of hazard analysis, recording this process, written records must be kept up-to-date.

We have a limited number of places available for free training covering an Introduction to Food Hygiene (bring your qualifications up to date) and training covering Hazard Analysis. We currently have 2 days available 24<sup>th</sup> April at Axminster and the 3<sup>rd</sup> May at Okehampton.

To book a place on these courses contact Mervyn Rice in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872**.

### Can't find the staff?

An often voiced problem amongst those of us needing to take on staff. Finding the right person can make a big positive difference to the performance of your business. Getting the wrong person can be a time-consuming disaster.

Yet how many of us have spent time thinking about how we should interview potential candidates in order to make a good decision on who to hire? A job interview is a very short time for you to make an assessment of a person that you ultimately want to be involved in your business for years to come. The questions we ask, the way we ask them, the responses were looking out for.

Do you ask leading questions? Do you build in an aspect of practical work to ascertain skill levels?

These aspects of an interview can make a big difference to finding a pearl in an oyster as opposed to a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Agri-BIP will be running a short ½ day course covering the important aspects of interview techniques for interviewers rather than interviewees! Whether you need to take on a stockman, a tractor driver, admin support, or someone to deal with your customers, this course will be helpful to you.

For more information, contact us in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872**.

### Sheep Expert's Timely Visit

We have been pleased to have organized some farmer meetings that were addressed by John Vipond – Sheep Consultant with the Scottish Agricultural Colleges. John will be known to some of you and has been highly rated by those who have attended his meetings, which have proved to be extremely interesting and stimulating. Comments we have received include:

“I wish I had met this guy 20 years ago”

“Every sheep farmer in the local parishes should have been here tonight”

“John has made me think in a new way about most of the management practices that I carry out – I must cut costs in several ways after this talk”

Some of the topics discussed and discussion items include: -

- When do I need to creep feed lambs & if so what should the ration be?
- Do you need to mill grain before feeding to sheep?
- Should you have a system that requires sheep to be assisted during lambing time?
- How many ewes an acre should you stock at turnout?
- What length of grass should the sward be for optimal utilization by ewes and lambs?
- When should you carry out faecal worm egg counts and how do you construct a worm treatment programme?
- How do you design the sheep shed?

The farmers who attended these meetings found them to be very useful when looking forward to life without livestock subsidies. All of us need to drive down costs if we are to attain profitable businesses in the global market economy that we now operate. The reception from the farmers who attended was excellent and they all felt it worthwhile and they all went away questioning what they did on their farms and seeing where they could make profitable changes.

We now have the opportunity to host John again and invite you to a meeting at West Devon BIP on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April at 1.00pm or at West Dorset (*venue to be confirmed*) on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April at 10.00am.

Contact us in the office on **Freephone 0800 592872** for more information and to book a place on either of these courses.

### NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

If you would like to receive your Agri-BIP newsletter by email or fax, send your details through to us at: -

E-mail: [team@bipwestdevon.biz](mailto:team@bipwestdevon.biz) Fax: 01837 659314

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

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