

## Farming Working Party report for January 2024

Farming is again on its knees due to the awfully wet weather that we have had since last July and December has been the wettest for a long time. The constant flooding of the roads throughout the Marshwood Vale has made transporting milk, beef and lambs difficult and for inputs, lorries have had long journeys to get around Gassons Lane and other lanes in the Char Valley Parish Council area. The mobile phones have been a lifeline for many lorry drivers to find out if lanes are passable and to warn milk lorries to come the long way around to avoid the floods, some days not coming until much later due to difficulties other places.

Although all the cattle are shut in on straw, sand or shavings because of the wet weather more of these bedding materials are required as cattle get wet feet going to feed and make the beds wet. Sheep want web "feet" to manage the wet fields and more foot health problems have been noticed, which means more treatment and time trimming and seeing to the problems. Also sheep have trod the fields before eating all the grass so more movements around fields and back again when the grass has been "washed" again. The constant rain has done damage to fields, tracks and woodland washing out deep ruts and washing the top of the tracks away which will need expensive repairs in the spring or when dry enough. Also a couple of trees have come down due to their roots being washed out. A job for a local farmer to chop the trunks and clear the lane, late at night saving the Dorset Council the job and expense.

Prices of milk are staying the same as the last few months, although Arla has risen their price to farmers by 2.9ppl, but they were lower than most other companies so that brings them in line with other dairies. Production for the country is over 1,000,000 litres down each day so hopefully with a shortage and world prices firming the price to farmers will go above the costs of production soon. Local market agents like Greenslade Taylor Hunt and Kivells have reported more than normal number of farms that have stock sales booked for 2024 where they are getting out of dairying and going into more RPA Green policies like SFI and County Stewardship. I hope there will not be a shortage of milk in the future.