

Report from the Farming Interest Group

The main subject on all rural farming businesses is the weather, it has hardly stopped raining since last July just short breaks here and there.

The impact on farming is horrendous for lambing either outside or in a shed as ewes and lambs need to go out for grass. The ground is constantly waterlogged and even quad bikes are finding the going hard and making ruts. Ewes are now getting sore teats which in turn effects the lambs and they are constantly wet and dirty. Another issue with outside lambing is navel infection due to the muddy fields, even with constantly moving fields for clearer pastures that in a few days all look dirty.

Cattle that are generally out in the fields at this time of year are still having to be kept indoors and fed expensive feed. Straw prices are through the roof at £130.00 per tonne just to bed the cattle up. Many farms are very short of silage and having to buy in extra feed. Dairy cows and heifers usually are to be found in the fields at this time of year but again inside. Milk prices have not gone up as anticipated due to world prices of butter, cheese, milk powder and cream all depressed, so that makes a difference to the price here. Although electric prices have reduced that is not much help to those who are on 2 or 3 year contracts that were taken out in Covid or during the Ukraine Crisis.

Crops of Winter Wheat are dismal with many rotted seeds and very patchy fields. Some farmers were going to replace with Spring Barley but here in the Vale that is not possible due to the wet and tractors getting stuck in soggy fields. Time is now right to prepare ground for silage crops but very little fertilizer or slurry has been put onto the growing crops, there is a very good amount of grass in the fields but it is now turning yellow in the stems due to the wet and that will not make sweet silage later.

Farmers are being tested to the brick and many are really depressed about the situation. When it does eventually become drier and ground works can commence the tractors will need to be going day and night to try to catch up. Also a lot of farmers have signed up to new SFI agreements planting herbal leys and more clover in the fields, for spring planting it is looking dodgy. So let's hope for a drier period soon.

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