

Farming Working Party report for February 2022.

Farming is carrying on as much the same as other years. The weather has been extremely kind to grass pastures and the sheep have had ample grass and stubble turnips throughout the winter and there is still considerable growth for this early in the year. The very low rainfall in January will no doubt have repercussions later in the year.

Prices of feed continue to rise at an alarming pace and dairy feed is rising by £54.00 per tonne when our winter contract ends. Sawdust for bedding has risen from £136.00 last spring to £193.00 pt now. We still have the potential increase in electric cost once contracts run out, diesel fuel has more than doubled and fertilizer is up 300%. Our prices have risen for milk in the last month; there is now a shortage of raw milk from farms and buyers are looking to take on more producers, many are buying milk on the Spot price which is relatively higher if there is any to be purchased. So many dairy farmers are still leaving the profession due to labour shortages for milking and general farm work, rising costs, the ever increasing rules and regulations of Red Tractor, the Environment Agency requirements for slurry storage and handling.

Beef and finished lamb prices are still keeping up, about the same as the autumn. Generally there is no waiting time to book stock into the abattoirs, (in the past you would need to book animals in several weeks prior). Usually in February prices to us came down when the credit card invoices arrive, but not this year as there seems to be a shortage of stock.

Environmental Schemes are expensive to execute and administer. We signed up to a Countryside Stewardship Scheme 2020 to start 2021 but so far have not seen a penny, although we have had to pay the Agent to do the initial plans, forms and correspondence. Now we have had to employ the Agent again to measure the field hedges for fencing that we have already had to pay finance. Food must be the farmer's first and most important job to run alongside improving the environment. This is fine but where is all the food to feed the nation coming from ? Imported but at what cost ?