

Farming Interests Working Party June report.

The weather has played a big part in the spring and early summer ground conditions. From a wet, cold late April to dry May and then rain the growing season for grass is abundant for all to see in gardens and the green lush fields around the Marshwood Vale. But crops like spring barley and forage maize have not fared so well. Barley that was put in March or early April had come up, before frosty nights and being drowned and many crops have rotted off and either had to be redrilled or drilled with forage maize. This crop also found problems with the far from ideal conditions of late frost and wet ground and many that were put in early have varying patches of no seed growing or very thin crops. The later seed that was put in early June has yet to get away and the old saying "knee high first of July" may not be correct this year. Silage crops have been good so far and second cut has already been taken in some places and in the pit ready for the winter.

A big problem this year has been the number of rooks in the Vale as they have no real predators and shooting them is an art, as they are so crafty. Even villages have been plagued with rooks and they are so noisy, they can decimate a crop of spring barley or maize seed by picking out the seed from the ground before it comes up or just after the shoots show. They are also pulling up the crop of Wild bird seed that we have put in rather than wait till the winter. They can just go along the lines and pull the plump grain out and they also cause massive problems in silage pits as they pick out the grain and good bits from the silage face, or go along the cattle feed passages and take what they want. The next biggest problem is they poo all over the cattle feed which is a definite black mark in the Red Tractor Inspection, but how can you stop them, as many people do not like rook scarer going off during daylight hours ?

The Australian Trade deal has now been signed this week, so we will await to see how it affects the agricultural businesses in this country, but we are still waiting for the Trade and Agricultural Commission to be set up to oversee trade deals, how long does that take?

The TB rules are changing yet again and the Government is going to ignore its own badger cull evidence and suspend some of the licenses, even though they have been shown to be working and the incidence of TB in certain cull areas is dropping, what outside influence is happening behind the scenes ? But why bother asking the people most at risk and those who have the awful task of having all the cattle tested 6 monthly at great expense and danger to the farmers for vets to use outdated and inconclusive tests. Many of the home bred cattle that the vets say have TB and found to be clear on post mortem. The compensation paid is about half to two thirds of the actual market value of cattle, but it is the awful strain on farming folk and the big sigh of relief that another 6 months is clear. But many farms in the Vale are shut down with no cattle movements allowed, only to slaughter and over the years have never had a positive case of TB. A relation of ours has just had 79 pedigree cows and cattle removed after a blood test and slaughtered but not one animal on post mortem has been proved to have had it, so the Animal Health are doing yet more cultures to try to prove the animals may have had the disease. What about all the unborn calves and the breeding genetics that have taken years to build up, this is happening all over the area? It would be better to spend the money on getting more accurate testing and blood testing rather than thinking about vaccinating badgers, (not an easy job) and cattle in the future.

