

Summer News 2016



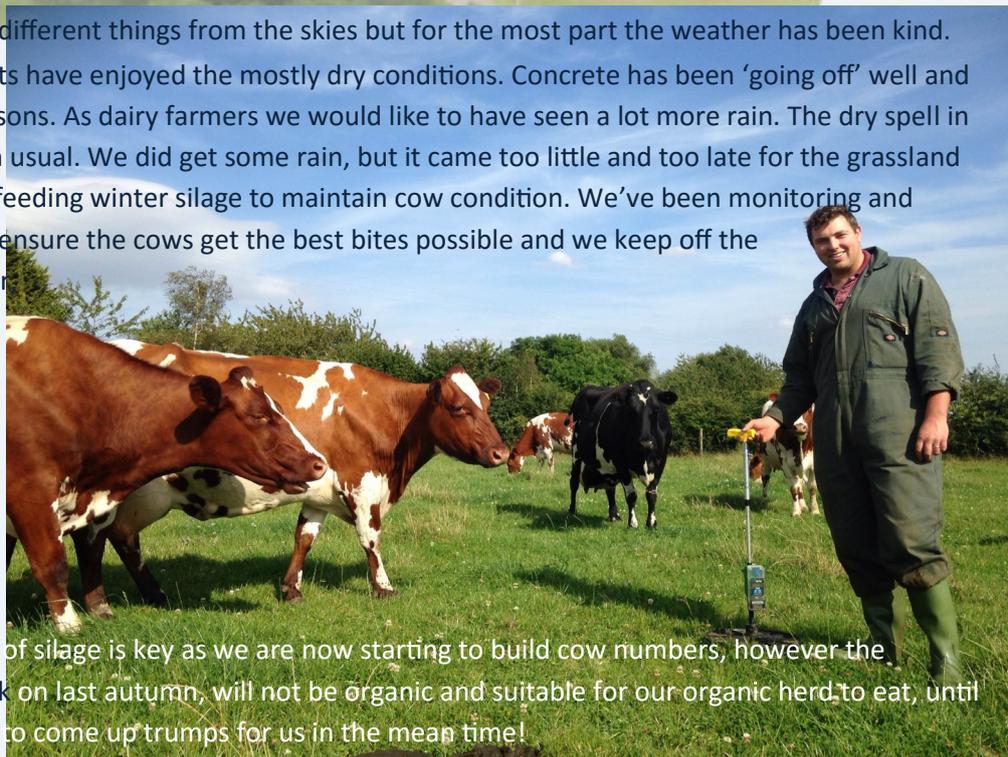
Dairy Farmer of the Year! We were delighted for Acorn Dairy to win at the Northern Farmer Awards. (Announced in March just after our Spring newsletter went to print!) There was much focus over our direct farmer: consumer relationship. So thanks must go to you, for choosing to buy our local, organic milk. The judging panel was made up of people within the industry, who judged from a knowledgeable background, which meant a lot to us. To spend an evening in Harrogate with many others running farming based businesses, also enjoying the chance to dress up, was a pleasure.

Brexit!

After some family discussion as to whether Acorn Dairy should be seen to have a stance on the matter, we decided we felt strongly enough to wade in! Some of you may have seen our field posters alongside the A1 in the weeks before the vote...sadly (in our opinion) our signs were clearly too small. Although ex-farm milk prices are already largely set by international commodity movements, dairy farmers will now lose the protection of the EU central agricultural policy (CAP). The CAP not only controls import/export into the EU but also provides a subsidy to farmers often seen as a buffer against large swings in commodity prices. Unfortunately this is now providing the bulk of the profit or minimising the losses on many farms. Without it there will be even more pressure to reduce unnecessary spending on improving animal welfare and wildlife/environmental projects such as hedge laying, which we feel can have a place alongside food production.

If the UK is going to follow a hard nosed free trade policy, competing in the world market, logic dictates there will be no room for subsidies to a small section of the UK economy, ie Agriculture. It will be up to the British farmer to make his pitch to the consumer emphasising quality, local, environment and hopefully jobs, to justify paying a premium for our produce. Costs associated with meeting standards, record keeping and labour etc will not fall after Brexit and home grown food will seem relatively expensive, compared on cost alone, to that produced in other lands not operating to the same standards. In short the farmer will probably have to get much closer to the consumer than they have done in the recent past. The alternative would be commodity farming on a larger scale than is currently the case, with the demise of many smaller "family" farms and the contributions they make to countryside life.

We have been wearing two hats and wanting different things from the skies but for the most part the weather has been kind. Our cow shed and silage clamp building projects have enjoyed the mostly dry conditions. Concrete has been 'going off' well and any hiatus in progress have been for other reasons. As dairy farmers we would like to have seen a lot more rain. The dry spell in June slowed grass growth a month earlier than usual. We did get some rain, but it came too little and too late for the grassland to make up lost ground. We have been buffer feeding winter silage to maintain cow condition. We've been monitoring and rotating his grazing paddocks very carefully to ensure the cows get the best bites possible and we keep off the silage fields. Here he Colin with the plate meter reading field dry matter/hectare. This tells him accurately how many cows this field can feed! Second cut silage had a good dry matter reading but was a little light. It looks lost in the new, extended silage clamp. The upside...our young families are making good use of the empty expanse of concrete to master their cycling and third cut silage is imminent. A good quantity of silage is key as we are now starting to build cow numbers, however the neighbouring 400 acre farm we took on last autumn, will not be organic and suitable for our organic herd to eat, until Oct 2017. Our home farm will have to come up trumps for us in the mean time!



GOOD DAIRY AWARD

COMPASSION in world farming

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We saw the immediate effects of the country's vote for Brexit the very next day. Graham had been advertising for a new herdsman, without much quality interest for some weeks. Seemingly Brits no longer want to do the 5am starts and weekend work and do not consider the otherwise varied and interesting career. So much so, a return call went in to Raido who, some of you will remember, cared our young stock until he returned to Estonia in April to raise his family in his home area. He had contacted us after realising Estonia had not progressed in his time away and prospects were limited. This could not have been an easy decision but the result that Raido was to come back, made us very happy. However following the UK's referendum result, Radio understandably decided we were no longer for him. Who indeed would want us! Thankfully for Graham's sanity, we have now found an enthusiastic and capable person, who joins us in September. He will learn a great deal from our experienced, professional farm team and we hope will soon settle into farm and village life with his family.

Building Progress



At time of writing, both the new 200 head cow shed and young stock shed have sides and roofs in place. Graham and

Gordon had a strong influence in their planning. Maximising fresh air movement drove many of their design decisions. Internally work is now underway to achieve the correct gradients for optimal clean walkways and slurry management. Ensuring the correct spacing and finishes to each bay is essential as we want the cows to have the most comfortable, individual beds to lie on possible. For this reason we are installing memory foam mattresses as the finishing layer. At each end of the cow shed is a foot bath area and there is a special pedicure zone to one side where Barry and his team will attend to each individual hoof's requirements. We have said it before... you can not give a cow and her feet too much attention. Happy, relaxed cows really do produce better milk in our opinion and our milk needs to be better, if we want you to choose it over supermarket milks.



Thank you for your custom.
Graham & Caroline

Customer Open Days

Come and meet the cows producing your organic milk.

If you are struggling to picture where your milk is coming from and would like to come and see for yourself, we would love to meet you. As part of Organic September we are holding a series of open farm events for our doorstep and business customers again this year. Last year we showed you the neighbouring land we had just started to convert to organic status. Through 2016 we have been updating you via facebook and bill notes on the silage clamp and the new cow sheds we have been building to house our larger herd. At the open events this year we will be sharing with you what goes into making an excellent cow shed—from the cow's perspective. Tractors, cows and calves will all feature too.

The evening events have proved popular in the past as they are a little more intimate. By request we will also be holding a Saturday day time gathering too this year. So please pick the one that suits you the best and come along. We look forward to seeing you. We go ahead in all weathers. Wellies if you have them. No dogs please. (Approx. 2hrs)

The dates are :

Thursday 22nd Sept Meet 5.30pm
Friday 23rd Sept Meet 5.30pm
Saturday 24th Sept Meet 1.30pm

Keep up on farm life, news and events on facebook and twitter . NB both of our profiles are fully open (i.e. you don't have to have your own facebook site.) So if you are yet to dip a toe in the world of social media, why not see how you get on browsing our profiles. Here we share the photos to accompany the weekly bill note comments you receive.

www.facebook.com/acornorganicdairy www.twitter.com/ac0rndairy

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