

Ulster Farmers' Union *UPDATE*

THIS WEEK

17 July 2015

UFU call for urgent meeting of UK Agriculture Ministers as dairy situation worsens: The UFU have held a meeting with dairy stakeholders including, the banks, dairy processors, CAFRE and DARD to discuss the worsening situation on local dairy farms. At the meeting stakeholders offered their own perspectives on how they see matters unfolding with a consensus that in the months ahead, all players within the dairy sector will face difficulties, especially from a cash flow perspective. To help address this ever worrying situation it was agreed that a UK-wide meeting of Agriculture Ministers needed to take place to discuss the difficulties facing the dairy sector. At a local level, a conference will also be held at the end of August/early September. The aim of this conference will be to look at primary production and ways in which we can address cash flow concerns and ensure that our local dairy industry gets through these very testing times. News followed the stakeholder meeting that the Global Dairy Trade (GDT) in New Zealand had fallen for the 9th successive time and that Whole Milk Powder fell by a further 13.1% to a record low of \$1,878/tonne. The UFU will continue to work closely with all stakeholders on this matter and will be increasing pressure on Agriculture Minister Michelle O'Neill to ensure that the difficulties facing the Northern Ireland dairy industry is addressed at a local, UK and EU level. **To read the full story visit:** <http://bit.ly/1fLPJ6Y>

UFU respond to DARD 2015 Cross Compliance announcement: The UFU has said that DARD's decision to amend the 2015 cross compliance verifiable standards on Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) could have gone further but is nonetheless a positive step in the right direction for farmers. DARD's decision to introduce changes to GAEC 4 – minimum soil cover and GAEC 7 - retention of landscape features will provide greater flexibility for farmers while also ensuring that the environment remains protected. The revision of GAEC 4 will offer farmers harvesting crops after 1 November the option to either leave the stubble from the crop in the land or plough the land and plant a green cover crop that will take up nitrogen. UFU have always argued that the ban on cultivation from 1 November, after harvesting late crops such as maize and potatoes, is counterproductive in terms of preventing soil erosion and places an unnecessary restriction on the sowing of winter crops. The amendment to GAEC 7 will allow farmers to cut hedges, trees and scrub from 15th of August 2015 upon approval from DARD. UFU have argued for years that the 1st March to 31st August closed period is too restrictive particularly for those planting oil seed rape or grass re-seeds and initially proposed that the end date of the closed hedge cutting period should be brought forward to 31 July. UFU feel that this revision, while not what was initially proposed, is a practical common sense 'win' for farmers and should help with the difficulties being experienced arising from the 1st March to 31st August closed period. Farmers will be required to notify DARD at least 10 days prior to the intended cutting date which the UFU feel is an unnecessary requirement which adds bureaucracy to what should ordinarily be a straightforward process. **To read the full story visit:** <http://bit.ly/1TF2wqe>

UFU raise Health and Safety concerns with DRD Minister: UFU says it's concerned about the health and safety of road users in the countryside, following the increasing number of complaints received from members around the non-cutting and maintenance of hedges and grass verges due to the budgetary cut backs within the Department of Regional Development (DRD). UFU acknowledge that roadside hedges are the responsibility of the landowner and that farmers do take it upon themselves to trim and maintain hedges near to and adjacent to the farm, while at the same time adhering to the legislative and regulatory requirements posed under CAP. However, the non-cutting and maintenance of grass verges on rural roads is posing serious questions around the health and safety of both farmers and the wider rural community. UFU has written to DRD Minister, Danny Kennedy, to raise members concerns and to ask that he give this matter his immediate attention so that farmers and the wider rural community can travel safely on rural roads. **To read the full story visit:** <http://bit.ly/1HAmTG>

Sheep worrying still an issue: UFU is urging dog owners and dog walkers to ensure their pets are supervised at all times. While the vast majority of dog owners act responsibly when walking their dog through the countryside, unfortunately there is still a small minority who persist with taking little precaution. Sheep worrying remains a concern for many farmers with many having witnessed livestock distressed, injured or killed by dogs. At this time of year the fields are full of ewes with lambs at foot, so an incidence of worrying could have a devastating impact on the family farm. UFU would ask that all rural dog walkers act responsibly by being aware of their surroundings, keep an eye out for livestock and keep their dog on a lead, dogs left unsupervised can be unpredictable and may well attack sheep with serious consequences. **For further info visit:** <http://bit.ly/1J48hL1>

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Poultry farmers urged to be vigilant: UFU is advising poultry farmers to be vigilant following confirmation of an outbreak of avian influenza on a poultry farm in Lancashire. The strain of avian flu is the H7N7 strain, which can infect people, but Public Health England has said that the risk from this strain is very low. Avian influenza is a serious, notifiable disease in poultry which has led to a number of precautionary measures being put in place. It is important that all bird keepers have their flock registered with DARD and practice a high standard of biosecurity regardless of the size of their flock, to ensure that their sites remain as secure as possible from the potential introduction of this disease. If you suspect that your birds have Avian Influenza you should contact your Private Veterinary Practice (PVP) or your local Divisional Veterinary Office immediately. Both DARD and the UFU are committed to doing all that they can to keep the disease out and are working closely with DEFRA in order to remain fully up to date on any developments. For further information visit: www.dardni.gov.uk. To read the full story visit: <http://bit.ly/1DgLF3x>

Nitrates Inspections Commence: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) recently began routine inspections for the environmental aspects of cross-compliance. Approximately 340 of Basic Payment Scheme claimants in Northern Ireland will receive inspections from the NIEA during 2015. Inspections over the last few years identified a range of non-compliance issues with the main reasons for breaches being, leaks from storage facilities and leaching into watercourses. Farmers and landlords should make themselves aware of the details and requirements of cross compliance but in particular the Nitrates Action Programme 2015-2018 and Phosphorus Regulations. During inspections this year, NIEA can request farm records from any year from 2010 to 2014 (2014 records can only be assessed after 30 June 2014) to partly assess farm compliance with the Nitrates and Phosphorus Regulations. Most of these records are already available on farm and keeping organised records will help avoid a breach of the regulations. For comprehensive guidance on the Nitrates and Phosphorus Regulations the most recent booklet, 'Nitrates Action Programme 2015-2018 and Phosphorus Regulations' is available on the DARD website or through any of the DARD regional offices. UFU members can also contact Union Headquarters or your UFU Technical Officer for advice on how to prepare for an inspection. For more information visit: <http://bit.ly/1LedUYJ>

2015 weather survey

Someone once said that farmers "love the weather, maybe even when it is making them miserable". The NFU, NFU Cymru and the UFU don't really want to know how much you love or hate the weather, but we are doing some research about your views on recent weather patterns and how your farm businesses might have been affected. So please fill in our survey <https://nfuresearch.nfuonline.com/wh/s.asp?k=143565993515>

NEXT WEEK

- Royal Welsh Show – Deputy President BB
- Dairy Meeting with Margaret Ritchie MEP – Dairy Chairman, Dairy Vice Chairman and Dairy Policy Officer
- Renewable Heat Incentive – Deputy President IF, Rural Enterprise Policy Officer
- Gas to the West Meeting – Deputy President BB, Legislation Chairman, Legislation Vice Chairman, Environment Chairman Legislation and Rural Affairs Policy Officer
- Policy committee meetings: None

UFU MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

→ For up to date fuel prices for UFU members using the UFU Maxol Fuel Card visit the new UFU website <http://www.ufuni.org/membership/services>