

Autumn News 2018



Drought – this Dairy Farmer's tale

For food growers and dairy farms in particular, the combination of this year's late spring & dry summer weather has been terrible. In spring we wrote to you relieved to have the 'Beast from the East' and its effect on late spring grass growth, behind us. First cut silage was good in quality and volume, but sadly 2nd and 3rd cut, yielded less between them than 2nd cut should have produced alone. Contractor costs are calculated on acreage, not volume of grass clamped, which makes for eye watering invoice opening. At the time of writing we are holding out for a 4th cut and a long autumn with the cows grazing into early November, as last year. We have enough silage (winter cow food!) to feed our ladies through the winter. If 2019 is another late spring, or overly wet and the cows need feeding inside well into April again, our stocks will be wiped out. We will have nothing left over to feed the cows if next summer is light on grass growth again. There is no organic silage available to buy locally or in the UK.



To give you a feel for the quantities- due to this summer's poor grass growth we have supplemented the cows' grazing with roughly 600 tonnes of silage... (which would fill 30 x artics lorries) and 110kgs/ cow of concentrates (a blend of beans, maize, lupins & sunflower seeds) the cost per tonne has increased by 14%. That's feed, now bedding... straw (what's left when wheat & barley have been harvested) has been in short supply. The late spring and dry summer meant crops only grew 50-70% of their usual height. The straw was short! We had to find additional acreage, so we had enough for bedding this winter. The price went through the roof as many farmers were feeding it instead of grass to their cows. (Straw is also being burnt at Drax power station and put into bio digesters to create electricity. This is the questionable side of renewable energy in our opinion.) We had balers all over the county following combines but we now have our straw which is a huge relief. So we would like 2018 to go into the annals as a 'freak' year. If it is repeated next year, Graham and Barry will have no hair left between them.



Calming Kefir 500ml £3.75



Nothing new for listeners to "The Archers" or those who came to our September open evenings on the Thursday & Saturday. We were delighted to be joined by Jill, who makes this ancient fermented milk beverage with our milk, near Cotherstone. Her tastings and information went down very well with you and us alike. Our own middle & upper generations have placed

their orders. Another lady in the know is Debs Hare, Manager at Cross Lanes Farm Shop, 'You must try it, you won't recognise yourself. We're all on it!' The strains of 'good' bacteria and yeast found in the kefir grains have fans claiming they help with IBS, weight loss, bones, teeth & skin issues and many more issues.

So if you would like to give it a try, do get in touch. We collect the Calming Kefir from Jill every Wednesday & your Acorn milkman/woman will deliver it to you Thursday, Friday & Saturday every week.

(FYI 500ml bottle= 3 servings)

Green Electric

Due to a quirk of the National Grid, our wind turbine can't supply our home generated green electricity to the neighbouring farm land we began farming organically in 2016. This has always been a bug bear for us, until now!

From October we start a new electricity supply agreement with British Gas. The electricity they supply to us, will be coming from off shore wind turbines in the North Sea. So we will at last be running entirely on Green Electricity on both farms. A significant step in the right direction. We are ever conscious of our operating footprint. Improvements in the load and mileage capacity, as well as the recharge times of 3.5T electric goods vehicles are followed closely.



Price Rises

We are thankful for continued growth in demand of our milk in the last 18 months. It has helped us absorb some substantial increases in costs of production over more litres sold. However this year has been exceptional and cost increases span our entire business from raw materials to feed the cows, through to labour delivering your milk and we need a price increase to maintain our quality based farming system.

In the last eighteen months we have seen price increases from all suppliers of food lines we buy in for you. You will see our rises from Oct 25th are minimal and in the case of many lines, we are still cheaper than Sainsburys. We remain 3p/pint cheaper for organic milk, delivered with no minimum order value or delivery charge!

Web Payments - coming soon.

Customers will soon be able to choose to pay their bill by card on our website 'Pay My Bill' tab. More info to follow on your green, weekly bill notes later this autumn.

By request we now have a supply of bottle carriers in stock for you. They carry **10** glass bottles neatly, safely & comfortably. They will not rust or scratch work tops & will keep empties to be returned, from under your feet & rolling around in the wind. We use red carriers on our milk rounds & have smart green ones for customers to order, if you would like one. **£10.**



Mystery Customers ?

Request from our office team. If sending a cheque, emailing or leaving us a voice message, please remember to give your name & address (not just the town.) We have many customers with shared names and it can take us a while to put the right address to the voice message/ correspondence. Thank you.

Doorstep Delivery Service in:

Darlington | Barnard Castle | Richmond | Northallerton | M. St G.
Aycliffe | Long Newton | Barningham & surrounding villages.
Also wider afield in Durham | Ripon | Harrogate | Newcastle

T: 01325 466999 E: organic@acorndairy.co.uk

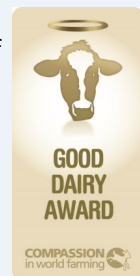
Open Days

It was our pleasure to welcome so many of you to the farm in September for the open days. We try to share as much farm life as we can via your weekly bill note and on the ubiquitous facebook but getting up close and personal with the cows and calves is unbeatable. Words can not convey a calf sucking your child's fingers or the smell of good silage and muck. This year you came in record breaking numbers. (Almost double last year!) Dr Julia Cooper from Newcastle University fascinated all ages with microscope images of the micro organisms and matter in our organically farmed soils- the basis of life. Debbie Mahaffey (sister in law to Herd Manager Barry,) brought the



right hand side of the shed to life, with her oil paintings of our heifers. We were honoured when she asked to launch her new career as an independent artist with us. You were there at the beginning of it all! Again, thank you to all who came. Meeting you makes the everyday 'challenges' worthwhile.

What happens to some dairy bull calves quite rightly hit TV screens and social media feed in September. Being bulls, they will never produce milk and retail/ caterers prefer a beef breed for their meat, over a dairy breed with less muscle. This leaves these poor animals with no value and sees some shot or transported to the continent at a few weeks old (the price of demands for cheap food- someone or something bears the cost.) Many of you, and some non customers, have been in touch to ask about Acorn's bull calves. Our Dairy Shorthorn cross cows do not produce record pushing volumes of milk, they do produce high quality milk and the cows are a very good 'all rounders.' Our bull calves are all bought by farmers within 10 miles of our farm. All are raised for beef, some organically and ALL are on Red Tractor farms. Our cow and calf welfare were factors in Acorn Dairy receiving the Compassion in World Farming Good Dairy Award in 2012. The award was many years ago now, but nothing has changed and we are proud of it.



The value of shopping locally has really hit home for us this year, as several businesses have closed & left our nearby towns. Acorn Dairy relies on local custom. This year we have actively prioritised 'local' for a number of services we buy. We are small but have a surprisingly wide touch in the local economy including: uniform, IT, electrical and legal support, vans & their maintenance, stationery, printing, design, PR and marketing, book keeping, HR, fuel, all farm contractors- silaging, slurry work, bailing, ploughing & seeding, shed building and civils, property maintenance, fencing, hedging, stone walling, pest control and security. These are now all supplied from local, independent companies within 20 miles of the farm and the majority less than 5 miles.

With seasonal shopping on the horizon we can all make our impact.

Use it or lose it is brutal, but true.

Thank you for your local custom.



Wholesale & Catering Deliveries:

Durham | Yorkshire | Northumberland
All Enquiries welcome.



Fresh organic milk direct from the farm