

# Spring News 2019



## Graham's Farm Update



At the end of February our region had officially been in drought for a month. In Jan- Feb we had only 48mm of rain, less than half the average for our area in Jan and February. Following on from last summer/autumn this is a real concern.

We were very pleased to have Spring Turnout on 25<sup>th</sup> March. This is a shade later than usual, but important given we have very little spare silage left over. The only reason we got through last summer was the surplus silage we had left from grass cut Summer 2017. We really do need a year with regular rainfall, not great for holidays but essential for grass growth. If we do have a

wet summer I promise I won't moan!

In case it doesn't rain this year we need to have a plan. So we are looking into the viability of a dedicated youngstock rearing unit- a farmer nearby, who will look after our heifers until they are two years old. This should ensure there is plenty of grass at Garthorne to feed the milking herd and cut for winter silage. If everything goes well, the first group of heifers will travel to the middle of North Yorkshire this autumn. The family there is aware that the heifers are not just ours, but of interest to you too, so regular updates will keep coming. You will keep up to date with Eve, our Christmas calf! She will be grazing with her cohorts on the banks of the River Ouse, in front of the National Trust property Beningbrough Hall... very grand! If you are looking for a day out, the Hall and the farm shop are worth a day trip. I just hope the girls don't come back with Yorkshire accents, the Durham lads on the farm will never understand them! That said, we are welcoming Marco and his family to the village. He will be a key part of our farm team and joins us from Spain via Scotland! So with

Claire (Canadian) and Tom who grew up in France we really do have a multi-cultural team.

The flip side to a dry winter is field activities. Spreading muck and slurry, rolling fields and preparing cow tracks for the grazing season were completed months earlier than normal. It is important to provide a good surface for cows to walk on as they commute to the grazing paddocks. Traditionally tracks are made of stone or concrete, which is OK provided they stay smooth with no loose stones on the top. In recent years we have covered our stone tracks with woodchip each spring. This provides cushioning for the cows. This has worked well but requires regular maintenance & can get expensive if woodchip has to be purchased. Research has shown that second hand astro turf works really well. The turf provides the cushioning required to protect the cows' feet and is heavy enough to stay in place as the cows walk on it. So when we heard Gateshead International Stadium



was being re-laid & the old turf was free at point of collection, we swung into action. The rolls are 2m wide so two side by side make the perfect width for the cows. We are trialling it on two tracks. So watch this space, we should have something to show you on the open evenings.

**Kefir** Winner of six national Great Taste Awards & North East Business Woman of the Year 2017, Allison runs Teesdale Cheesemakers. She is a vocal advocate for kefir. (Lots of info on the various and numerous health improvements offered by consuming fermented dairy online.) Here she is in production mode about to feed her kefir grains our organic milk, and on an increasing scale since February, to meet your orders. Allison has been tweaking her production/ recipe process to find the perfect mix of fizz and tang. We find it wonderfully efficacious and are delighted to be working in collaboration with Allison. All pre orders for Kefir will be received with your milk Thurs, Fri or Sat mornings. (500ml £3.75 = 4 servings of gut health.)



We continue to bring you excellent Yeo Valley yoghurts on our rounds. Yeo has been around for a long time but that doesn't mean they have lost their lustre- less antibiotics & no pesticides in the production of the milk & fruit used.) It is still the best range available by a long way...in our opinion. Customers can buy these at less than one would pay in ANY supermarket at time of press. Delivery is fortnightly. Most place a standing order for their favourite pots. We have a new flavour in our range- Rhubarb 450g £1.45 to your doorstep.



## Request

We revisit an old request. With the loss of our local bank branch & some unfavourable 'reviews' of fees for physical banking of cash and cheques, we have experienced a jump in costs and admin time tracing cheques lost by the banks internally or on their way to the bank, via the post office! We ask again for any customers who could pay by direct debit to do so. Payments are taken on the 14<sup>th</sup> of each month, for the previous month-end amount owed. The final bill of each month has the direct debit reminder on also.

Just ring and we will send you a copy of the mandate, including your Direct Debit Guarantee, to complete & return to us. You can also print a copy from the resources tab of our website.

### Leaving the EU...

We had decided to write this newsletter after 31<sup>st</sup> March so we could comment pragmatically on what changes we foresaw ahead for our business, however we have no information at time of writing. Needless to say we watch the news every evening, sad at the situation we find ourselves in. One customer wrote in & politely requested for us to leave our concerns on Brexit effects, off his Saturday morning bill note. We stand corrected & look forward to the Summer / Autumn news when we can comment that the position of UK high quality, food production looks secure, our politicians eventually made a good job of a tricky situation and the country was re-united... (where is that emoji for crossed fingers?)



The above benefits of organic farming, lead us nicely to one of those, most visible to all. Cows grazing. Turnout 2019 was another year highlight and it was great to have some customers here to join in. You can see the video of your organic cows on our website and facebook page.

Thank you for your custom.

*Graham & Caroline*



## Good Food

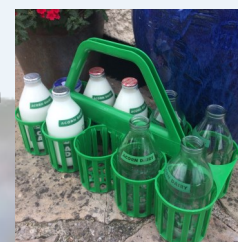
March & April sees the bulk of the annual regional and national food shows we attend. They used to be heavily populated with growers and producers of food you can make a meal of. Now they are dominated by coconut water, protein balls, essential supplements & the like, all focusing on niche areas of our diet that we are told are lacking. This comes alongside the growth of 'Free From' foods, which is a buzz word on the increase. Worryingly these are being marketed as optimal food stuffs, in a more impactful way than many organic products. 'Organic' has to become more 'marketing savvy.'

Ten to fifteen years ago, a sensibly priced organic product was easy to spot & considered a great find. Now, even we have to study the back of packs to get to the truth. Clever marketing has us thinking we are eating food with a healthy & sustainable provenance, when in fact it falls far short of what we were aiming to achieve as a consumer. The organic food sector is back to selling itself and ALL the virtues it offers for the environment, wildlife, animals & consumer. Rather than cutting out whole food groups and then requiring supplements to fill in the blanks, the Soil Association shine a light on choosing higher quality products that feed our bodies 'well', whilst not impacting on the environment. This is the way to drive up standards.

Packaging is also big news but in reality there are few if any products out there that actually offer sustainable solutions. An interesting, credible article from the Soil Association looked at shopping bags; paper, plastic & cotton. Re- usability, chemical breakdown, carbon and water use in production & delivery. No one bag was better than the other. All were bad. (The cotton bag needed to be used 131 before its impact started to reduce.)

The key is to reduce packaging full stop. Your glass milk bottles average 61 round trips, before breaking & being recycled by you or us.

Our HDPE poly bottle, label and cap are all made from the same polymer. This means they can go into your recycling bin as one- they do not need separating. In North Yorkshire & Darlington these **ARE** then all shredded, washed and pelletised for their next life. For customers looking at waste reduction- we can recommend looking at both Riverford and Organic Pantry, who grow organically & deliver fruit & veg with minimal / zero one use packaging .



### 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

### Wholesale & Catering Deliveries:

Durham | Yorkshire | Northumberland  
All Enquiries welcome.



*Fresh organic milk direct from the farm*