

BROADLEY COPSE NEWSLETTER

ASH Farming LLP

Spring has finally arrived and as you may have noticed we have now started to move some of the outdoor pigs onto new fields around Balsams Farm as part of their two-year rotation. This year we have trialled 2 different grass seed mixes to see if we can find one that will be more resilient to the sows rooting the ground so it will mean the fields have green cover for longer.

We have also started planting our fields around the Broadley Copse site again like we did last year, the mix is made up of Mustard, Vetch and Phacelia. This mix helps reduce soil nutrient leaching, reduce residual odours and is very supportive to insect life, especially bees!

As with most industries Covid has been an incredibly difficult time for the pig sector. Abattoirs and suppliers have been losing staff on a massive scale and this has led to a loss of export markets to China which is worth a good percentage of the price we receive, and the pig price plummeted which was testing for even the most resilient of businesses.

Thankfully with our food service sector beginning to gradually open, hopefully the price will now be on the up. To help support British Agriculture the key when buying your food is to look for the Red Tractor logo as it then means that the food you buy has been responsibly sourced, safely produced and comes from crops and animals that have been well cared for.

The downside of the warmer months is the arrival of flies, however as per the last few years we are still welcoming fly samples and we will be reinstating the fly traps like we did last year along the boundary to the village, we plan to install these during May.



Basil Baird (Fareham) LTD

All of our spring wheat, grown for pig food and spring barley, grown to make beer have been drilled. Drilling conditions were perfect, and the crops look great, although now they could do with a good drink of water and some warmer weather to get them growing. The peas for human consumption will be drilled around 15 April and the maize for the AD plant around mid-May after the pigs have been moved to their new sites.

We have planted 1,200 new native trees in the woods this spring and have cleared a lot of old fencing and brambles to tidy the place up and encourage more wildlife on the farm. We are drilling another 60 acres of wild bird cover on the farm this May which will help feed many birds next winter. Last winter we watched thousands of birds feeding which was really exciting to watch. We have invested in a thermal monocular to see what wildlife is out and about at night and we are regularly seeing 50 plus brown hares, which used to be very rare at Downs Farm, along with fallow and roe deer, barn owls and badgers.

The 3,000 meters of hedging that we planted 14 months ago, are now really getting going, deer are a constant threat to the new buds and they need to be kept watered in dry times (like now) otherwise the plants will die. The Dew pond that we created 12 months ago has a lot of "bug life" within the water and the wildlife use it a lot to drink from.

Some of grassland areas on the farm are Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) so we have invested in buying six pregnant ewes (sheep) to graze the grassland and promote wildflowers and to keep brambles, weeds and other grass weeds at bay, the six ewes have just given birth to 10 healthy lambs.

You may have noted that we have been spreading the bio-fertiliser from the AD plant (tractors and red tankers) on to our grassland, wheat, barley as well as other farmers in the area. This is the spent product after the AD process that comes from the plant every day, it is then pasteurised and then goes into the big lagoons before spreading, this nutrient rich green bio-fertiliser is a direct alternative to factory made chemical fertilisers and is much better for the crops and soil. You can see from the photo below (picture 2) there is a photo of a field of wheat, you can see a lighter green 24m strip the whole length of the field, this area was given bagged fertiliser and the rest of the field that is darker green was given digestate, the darker areas are stronger plants and will produce more wheat and straw per Ha leaving a better carbon footprint.



Broadley Energy Limited

The Energy plant is running at about 75% output at present because of routine maintenance and some mechanical failures. The plant usually uses pig manure from the buildings and maize grown on farmers fields, with the drought from last summer affecting maize yield tonnage the plant is running slower than anticipated. Alison and her team are doing a great job at going through each part of the plant, working on improving it's performance and reliability for the future.

The plant is currently producing less bio fertiliser than was forecasted hence less tankers on the roads this spring. If everything comes together like we believe it will do then we will be up to full performance by September when the new maize crop is cut and starts to be used through the plant.