

Rural Report

A monthly newsletter focusing on issues of rural life and farming of relevance to the work of the Church of England in the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.

Information is drawn from organisations connected with the countryside (in its widest sense) within Suffolk and beyond.

The newsletter will produce brief reports giving factual information on a range of issues. Items may be of general interest or provide opportunity for prayer.

If more details are needed on any of the topics mentioned, please contact Brian Chester at bc@bcnewslink.com or call 01572 757600

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■ **An avian influenza** prevention zone is now in force across the country following recent cases of the disease in wild birds. The AIPZ means there is a legal requirement for all bird keepers to follow strict biosecurity measures. Keepers with more than 500 birds will need to restrict 'non essential access' to their site and house free range birds. Backyard owners with smaller numbers of poultry must also take steps to limit the risk of the disease spreading.

■ **A study** published by the Livestock, Environment and People project at Oxford, shows that average meat consumption in the UK fell from 103.7g per head a day in 2008 to 86.3g a day in 2019 (a 17% decrease). Red meat reduced (13.7g/day) and processed meat (7g/day); white meat increased by 3.2g/day.

■ **A group** of international scientists has questioned the 'reliability' of data which links meat consumption to a dramatic increase in deaths which has been used to support the development of major policy documents – including Henry Dimbleby's National Food Strategy. *The Grocer*

<https://www.nlaf.uk/Library/content/Detail.aspx?ctID=ZWWhNzBIY2QtZWJjNi00YWZiLWEIMTAtNWExOTFiMjIjOWUj&rID=MjczNTI=&sID=MQ==&qrs=VHJlZQ==&rrtc=VHJlZQ==>

■ **The use of antibiotics** in livestock in the UK has fallen again, according to a report released by the government's Veterinary Medicines Directorate. The UK now has one of the lowest levels of antibiotic use in Europe, having reduced by 52% in six years between 2014 and 2020. Overuse of antibiotics in livestock threatens both animal and human health, as the efficacy of life-saving medicines is reduced if bacteria become resistant to antibiotics.

■ **The Country** Land & Business Association has claimed that spending plans under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will lead to a shortfall of £315 million for rural businesses over a seven-year period, questioning the government's commitment to closing the productivity gap and 'levelling up' the countryside.

■ **GCSE students** will be writing about the importance of British farming in their exams next year. The Back British Farming campaign was chosen as an example of how to galvanise public support to bring about change in the AQA study book for Citizenship Studies. The campaign's food standards petition, backed by Jamie Oliver and signed by a million people, features opposite a case study on climate activist Greta Thunberg.

■ **The association** that represents British free range egg producers says a price rise is urgently needed to cover increases in the cost of feed, energy, transport, and labour which have been rising over the past 12 months and show no sign of abating. Other sectors of the livestock industry - especially pig producers - are also facing higher bills as feed wheat and feed barley prices continue to rise along with the ingredient cost of proteins.

■ **The National Pig Association** is aware of 16,000 pigs having been culled on farm, but that is just those reported – the true number is likely to be much higher. The worst-case scenario is unfolding on many farms and the Government and supply chain are under renewed pressure to do much more to help. As already crippling feed prices continue to rise and the pig price falls, due to the supply chain issues and low EU prices, the dire financial situation is worsening, too. For many, it is a desperate battle for survival.

Weekly Tribune dated November 29.

■ *"I am a masters student studying for a degree in occupational psychology. Alongside this I keep a small number of native breed cattle, sheep and poultry with the aim to sustainably rear meat for the table, while preserving the breeds themselves. It is my belief that academic research should be utilised alongside many other tools, to help illustrate to the wider community the importance of mental wellbeing and balance in an agricultural working environment."*

Ellie Wilson writing for the Sustainable Food Trust.

This newsletter was initiated under the guidance of the Diocesan Rural Affairs Group set up as a means of identifying current rural issues and considering how the church should respond.

