

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



Issue 112: July 2022

■ **The British Horse Society** has reported a steep rise in road-related rider incidents across East Anglia in 2021. A total of 241 cases were recorded against 80 in 2020. Essex was worst affected with 63 incidents, followed by Cambridgeshire with 43 incidents - and one horse fatality. In Norfolk there were 38 incidents and 34 in Suffolk.

■ **A team of ecologists** and veterinary scientists at the Universities of Cambridge and Leeds, after assessing the scientific basis of calls for a return to mixed farming as a way of reducing the risk of future pandemics, has concluded that 'contrary to the prevailing wisdom, moving away from intensive farming by switching to more extensive production systems, such as 'free-range', could actually increase the risk'.

■ **The Nuffield Trust** has warned that a crisis in general practice is only going to get worse 'with an increasing number of GPs leaving clinical practice or working part-time, and many practices unable to fill vacant GP posts'. For many rural areas, housing development is compounding national problems of recruiting and retaining GPs.

■ **Although wheat** prices have fallen back from a February high of £356 a ton, they are expected to hold at £276/t for the harvest yielding £106 more than last year, according to Josh Dewing, of Dewing Grain, a grain marketing and storage firm which operates across Suffolk and Norfolk. *East Anglian Daily Times*

■ **A new research** project will study this year's rash of bird influenza outbreaks - including nine in Suffolk - to help understand how the disease is evolving. The one-year project has been named 'FluMap'.

■ *"We are delighted to know that through this capital funding programme, the Government is renewing its support for village halls in this jubilee year. At the heart of rural communities for over a century, these unique volunteer-run halls do so much to support the well-being of local residents, as well as helping to sustain the many livelihoods which depend on use of these important buildings."* David Emerson, chair of Action with Communities in Rural England, commenting on a £3 million fund to aid rural community buildings

■ **The government's** new food strategy fails to deal with the 'serious short-term issue' of soaring costs and food inflation, according to East Anglia's farming leaders. Both the NFU and CLA claim that the plan does nothing to tackle the impact of higher costs on farms and consumers.

■ **Clive Watling**, of Naunton Hall Farms, and Ron Backhouse, of RH & R Paul, were awarded their Class 3 Long Service Awards at the Suffolk Show for completing more than 60 years of service with the same business.

■ **Last year**, the UK imported £24.5bn worth of fruit and veg, meat, cereals, and dairy and eggs but a report by Savills claims that 69% of these imports were 'lower standard'. The report warns that losing UK production to third countries as a result of increased UK costs risks importing more food from sources where traceability and environmental standards may not be guaranteed.

■ *"We fully understand, and support, tree planting and natural regeneration to address the climate crisis, but trees need to be part of a working landscape and by growing the right tree in the right place woodland creation must work in harmony with food production. The challenge of tackling biodiversity and the climate change crisis is best met by supporting regenerative farming and woodland creation within working landscapes."*

Tim Bonner, Countryside Alliance

■ *"I have often heard it said that intensive agriculture and biodiversity cannot be reconciled on the same piece of land. By re-purposing less productive agricultural land and creating farmland bird friendly habitat, songbird numbers doubled while arable crop yields increased simultaneously. By managing the habitat as assiduously as crops both objectives were achieved."* Dr Alastair Leake on a lowland farm project run by the Game & Wildlife Conservation 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.