



Learn to Love the internet! Computer Courses for Farmers

The Netherfield Centre is planning a series of computer courses. These could help you to make better use of the internet & specialist computer programmes that will save you valuable time.

Increasingly, farm records such as cattle movements and applying for Cattle Passports can be set up and reported to Defra electronically saving an enormous amount of time and money each year for the farmer.

The first course on 14th February will be "Passports for Cows: an Introduction to the Internet". This course will suit anyone interested in learning how to use the internet. See our course schedule for details. For future courses, we plan to tailor our training to suit your needs.

We have therefore included a brief survey in this newsletter.

Let us know if you would like either basic or advanced computer training in:

- ▲ word processing
- ▲ setting up accounts
- ▲ databases
- ▲ producing leaflets
- ▲ website design
- ▲ internet marketing

Could Biofuels reduce costs on the farm?

Andrew Martin, who farms at Romney Marsh Farms in Kent, is leading a regional Biofuel Project. His aim is to develop a wider perception of a link between sustainable farming, adding value and biofuels. "I will be looking at what is required to make it viable for groups of farmers to collaborate to produce biofuels to reduce their own energy costs" says Andrew.

Andrew is supported by the Government Office for the South East's Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food. Over the next few months Andrew will be championing production of bioethanol, biodiesel, and PPO (pure plant oil). He will also be promoting producer groups and market links (such as with local delivery fleets or

taxi firms). Andrew will be a guest speaker at a free workshop on Biofuels on 16th February 2006 at Plumpton College.

How can I learn more?

Learn about the opportunity to grow crops for Biofuels and collaborate with other farmers for on farm processing.

The workshop, open to all will be run by The Netherfield Centre with Lewes District Council 'Action in Renewables' programme on 16th February.

It will be held at Plumpton College, near Lewes, East Sussex.

For more details and to book contact Topsy on 01424 775 615.

Training Courses:

Starting a Sheep Flock
Lambing
Shearing
Managing a Sheep Flock

Starting a Beef Herd
Managing a Beef Herd

Starting a Pig Herd
Pig Handling & Care

Poultry Rearing
Growing Vegetables
Grassland Management
Forage Analysis

On-Farm Selection of
Finished Livestock
Direct Meat Marketing
Basic Food Hygiene
Butchery Courses

For up to date information & details see our web site
thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk

Making contact with The Netherfield Centre

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The European Agriculture Guidance & Guarantee Fund of the EU. The project is also funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Common Cause, Rother District Council & Plumpton College.

More Pounds from Methodical Butchery

Kirstie and Mark Banham are full time farmers near Chipstead in Surrey. For the past 11 years they have been rearing sheep on their 106ha (263 acre) holding. In 2004 the need arose to diversify.

In 2004, Kirsty and Mark decided to direct sell their lamb at farmers' markets in Surrey and London and to sell whole and half lambs at the farm gate.

When customers starting asking for 'shanks' or 'stewing neck' Kirstie and Mark realised they needed to know more. They particularly needed to know how the cut pieces fitted together to make the whole animal, something that they couldn't learn from using a cutting service.

Customers started asking for "shanks"

As a result Mark, Kirstie and an employee, Sarah, attended the Netherfield Centre two day Lamb Butchery Course, in June.



KIRSTIE AND MARK SELLING AT A LONDON FARMERS' MARKET

"The course helped us to understand the cuts and muscle groups and how a carcass needs to be butchered methodically", said Kirstie.

"I can now visualise the carcass and the cuts it will produce."

"We were also having problems displaying meat and keeping cuts from discolouring. Dave Rook, the trainer, showed us how to arrange our meat so that it not only looks pleasing but also preserves its colour and fresh look", she added.

The abattoir, Southern Traditional Meats (STM) at Henfield cut the Banham's lambs into three basic parts, legs, shoulders and whole saddles. These are taken to market and cut on the stall.

"We now have our lamb cut into three basic parts."

"The butchery course has given us the confidence to cut our meat in response to customer demand, to offer more, sell more, and to importantly retain customer loyalty", said Kirstie. "We used to get a number of whole racks left over at the end of a market until we realised that people thought it was too big a joint. Now we can cut them in half so that a customer can cook one half and freeze the other or we can cut the rack into cutlets" said Kirstie.

The Banhams sell at 9 markets a month and can sell up to 50 whole lambs including their farm gate sales. Interestingly these have remained steady at about 2 to 3 boxed half lambs a week. To meet year round demand, Mark and Kirstie have had to product plan. They batch their ewes so that they lamb in January, February and March. Additionally they buy in some stores. They are aiming to increase their flock to 800 ewes, to supply their markets all year with their own lambs. Another benefit of cutting their lamb is that Mark has become better at selecting the finished animals: as he said "I can now visualise the carcass and the cuts it will produce."

Lamb sausages and minty burgers have been another winner. With this in mind Kirstie and Sarah are planning to do The Netherfield Centre Sausage Making Course.

"Although sausages and burgers can be made for us; we want to be able to respond to customer feed back and make our own varieties" says Kirstie "one of the most rewarding aspects of direct selling at markets is the enthusiastic feedback we receive from customers and, if there are criticisms, we like to be able to react and make changes".

Keeping pace with the consumer

To keep pace with customer demand the Banhams are not stopping at lamb, and they have recently diversified into Sussex beef, Christmas goose and are expanding their egg production.



DAVE ROOK INSISTS ON A "HANDS-ON" APPROACH TO HIS BUTCHERY TRAINING

2006 Netherfield Centre Butchery Training Courses

JANUARY

Pork Butchery & Sausage Making

FEBRUARY

Bacon & Gammon Curing
Poultry Processing

MAY

Pork & Lamb Butchery. Sausage Making. Bacon & Gammon Curing

JUNE

Kate Walker's Food Smoking



Thanks - to the South East Food Group Partnership & SEEDA for your support

Free Training for Horticultural Businesses

Root Connections is a two-year project that will provide **free training** to Sussex-based small and medium size horticultural businesses and their employees. Training can be available at a wide range of locations, including in the workplace and neighbourhood venues. A key aim of the project is to provide access to training for businesses that are located in rural areas, particularly Rother and Wealden Districts.

Training is available in

- ▲ business management
- ▲ marketing
- ▲ horticultural skills
- ▲ bespoke courses can be arranged subject to demand



Plumpton College is leading the project and working in partnership with Chichester College, The Landscape Training Group, Sussex Enterprise and Lantra. Co-financed by the European Social Fund and the Learning Skills Council, the Root Connections project commenced in April 2005.

Contact Ann Brigden, Project Manager Root Connections on 01273 890454 or via email ann.brigden@plumpton.ac.uk



Volunteers needed to maintain and protect wildlife habitats. Working days, run at weekends are organised by Newleaf. Newleaf are based at Plumpton College and consist of a group of second year Countryside Management students.



Help with your waste



New legislation prevents the uncontrolled burning or burying of plastic sheeting, packaging, pesticide containers, seed bags, hazardous waste (asbestos, batteries, waste oil, etc) and tyres. The East Sussex *betre* (business excellence through resource efficiency) project offers **FREE** practical support & advice to small

& medium businesses, particularly those in the farming & tourism sectors, to identify cost saving and improvements in:

- ▲Waste minimisation ▲Recycling
- ▲Energy & water efficiency

Betre can also help you understand legislation and arrange a site visit & environmental review.

Five Green Action Awards with 50% match funding up to £500. To help reduce energy and water use.

East Sussex *betre* is delivered by EcoSys, a not-for-profit education company and is run in partnership with all East Sussex local authorities and the East Sussex and Hastings Sustainable Business Partnerships. It is funded by The Wealden & Rother Rural Partnership and East Sussex County Council.



Contact the technical helpline 01273 245654 or help@ecosys.org.uk or visit egeneration.co.uk/eastsussex

A future in land based business!

Career Opportunities at Plumpton College - there's more than you think

February, June & October 2006

Taster sessions for school students. Telephone for more information.

11 March 2006

Careers, courses information and fees advice.

Open Day 13 May 2006 .

For further information or visits on another day please telephone Plumpton College 01273 890454

Free Training for Farmers who Host School Visits

Access To Farms is offering **free training** to farmers who host visits from schools. It is a three day course and will be held at **Ivyland Farm, Netherfield Centre, on the 8th and 22nd February and 2nd March.**

The course is known as the Countryside Educational Visits Accreditation Scheme (CEVAS). For more information contact Meg Hart on 01494 562 716.



Producer Network Meetings

The popularity of the Netherfield Centre one-day introductory courses has helped a number of landowners and farm businesses launch new livestock enterprises. In response to demand, the Netherfield Centre has introduced lunchtime meetings for those producing lamb, pork and beef.

“These meetings are enabling producers to get together to discuss matters such as marketing and managing their enterprises. Sharing ideas, expertise and in some cases pooling machinery and labour resources can lead to better profitability.” says Training Co-ordinator, Simon Bishop. Experts are at hand as well as the facilities and the livestock at Ivyland Farm for both planned and impromptu practical demonstrations. A lunchtime snack made from farm and local produce ensure that these free meetings are a very enjoyable and informative event.

Report from the Pig Producers Network Meeting

At the Pig Producers meeting in November, discussion focussed on direct selling, gross margins, the economics of finishing weaners vs. rearing piglets and marketing rare breeds. Exchange of knowledge continued out in the barn, where expert and long established producer, Charles Bull, demonstrated how to feel the fat cover on a finished porker.

A major issue for small scale, free range pork producers is the cost of production and small returns.

Mandy Galloway, who rears Saddleback crosses on a traditional High Weald farm, believes that one of the strengths of the network meetings will be producers joining forces to ensure continuity of supply to local retail outlets. “If we can work together to facilitate supply of a superb product, maybe we can persuade buyers to meet the higher costs of production faced by producers like ourselves” said Mandy.

HANDS ON, FEELING THE FAT OF A PORKER



Diary

Beef Producers Lunch

Tuesday 25th January

Diversification - Organic Veg Growing

January

Pig Producers Lunch

Tuesday 21st February

Sheep Producers Lunch

Tuesday 23rd March

Time 11.30 - 2.00pm at Ivyland Farm

Netherfield

Biofuels Workshop

16th February at Plumpton College

Telephone 01424 775615 to book

FOR SALE AND WANTED

200 bales @ £2.00 per bale of organic small bale hay. Buyer to collect from Pevensy Marsh area. Contact: martinburdon@btconnect.com or telephone 07703 538240

25 tonnes Organic Wheat and 25 tonnes Organic Feed Beans.

Contact: Christopher Strangeways on 01797 280226.

Articles for sale, wanted, situations vacant and work wanted can be submitted for inclusion in our newsletters or on our web site. Please email info@thenetherfieldcentre.co.uk or telephone 01424 775 615