

## **GRAZING FORUM MEETING**

**10 September 2009**

**NFU Offices, Newmarket**

### **Minutes**

#### **Attendees**

CHAIR-Victoria Perry-Natural England

Caroline Cranbrook-CLA/Farmer

Rob Wise-CLA

Jean Turnbull-Business Link

Alex Butler-Zagni-NFU

Peter Anderson-Animal Health

Alison Smyth-National Trust

Molly McKay-Norfolk Farm Vets

Paul Mace-NRBAS

Dick Plumb-Suffolk Smallholders

Estelle Hook – Norfolk Coast Partnership

Tim Leigh- Anglia Quality Meat Association Ltd

Amber Taylor-Natural England

#### **Apologies**

Mike Mack-NRBAS

Michael Richardson-EBLEX

John Reeves-RSPB

Mike Render-Forestry  
Commission

Julie West- Tastes of Anglia

#### **Minutes of last meeting**

##### **Action-ALL**

Please ensure all information regarding animal disease is passed on to Victoria Perry for circulation as well as all event dates and news stories for the Grazing Exchange website and calendar.

##### **Welcoming new members**

Tim Leigh gave an overview of the Anglia Quality Meat Association. AQM is one of the UK's leading multi-species co-operatives offering business, management and practical advice and support to the livestock industry and represents a large proportion of farmers in East Anglia.

Tim has kindly offered forward information about the Grazing Exchange to his members in their next newsletter and has agreed to become a member of the Grazing Forum. For more information on AQM visit [www.aqm.co.uk](http://www.aqm.co.uk).

Estelle Hook is part of the Norfolk Coast Partnership, who co-ordinate activities in the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A 5 year action plan with management objectives and actions for the ANOB has just been launched and is now available on their website. <http://www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk> One of the main difficulties in managing the ANOB is the difficulty in finding graziers. Estelle will pass on information from our meetings to all of the ANOB's in the Eastern region.

### **National Animal Disease Information Service. (NADIS) – Molly McKay**

Norfolk Farm Vets Ltd are heading up the NADIS EEDA project where a team of 14 veterinary practices deliver free training on disease to farmers and stockmen across the East of England in an attempt to improve the health, welfare and productivity of stock in our region.

The 14 practices will deliver a co-ordinated training program in the form of seminars, workshops and one to ones covering dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep and game birds over the next 3 years. A monthly newsletter will be circulated and information on the training is available on the NADIS website. <http://www.nadis.org.uk/Regions/EA.html>

**Action - VP** Details of the training to be put on the Grazing Exchange website.

### **RDPE update with Rural Enterprise hub- Paul Mace (For Mike Mack)**

The new Land skills East manager (Sarah Heaffy – ex Broads Authority) is now in place.

Paul is the new facilitator for Waveney Valley Local Action Group (LAG). After a slow start the group is now working hard to catch up and is focusing on raising public awareness and targeting livestock farmers – they have a large areas of land in the Waveney that needs grazing.

A discussion followed on the difficulties the group has had reaching local farmers/ land managers to make them aware of the funding opportunities, and it has been especially difficult to attract/develop collaborative projects.

Paul advised that the 'collaboration issue' is now being reviewed and further guidance is expected from EEDA. It is hoped that projects will now be considered that can deliver wider benefits to the local and farming community. If this is accepted then applications previously ineligible because they didn't meet the criteria will be re-assessed to see if they would now be eligible.

**Action-MM** – to circulate current restrictions on collaborative working and update members on the Rural Enterprise Hub.

**Action-VP and CC** – get clear statement from EEDA on collaboration.

**Set Aside – Campaign for the farmed Environment (CFE), Rob Wise & Alex Butler-Zagni**

VP circulated CLA guidance note.

RW – CFE is a joint CLA/NFU initiative using a voluntary approach to retain land out of production. It will be a large task to deliver and will need to work closely with partners.

3 distinct target areas have now been identified:-

1. farmland birds
2. resource protection
3. Biodiversity.

There is a National Steering Group, sub divided into a delivery and a monitoring group who will be responsible for developing a delivery plan to submit to DEFRA by the end of this month. All counties in the East Anglian region will be involved and each region will structure its own campaign, probably using county level steering and advisory groups, lead by a farmer and including other outside organisations to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

Beacon farms will be identified by early 2010 - anyone who would like to be involved at a regional or county level should make themselves known as soon as possible.

**Action-CC and VP-** to look at possible arable reversion options included as ELS options as well as HLS.

**Animal Health**

Despite frequent reports there have been no further confirmed blue tongue cases in the region - the high level of vaccination in East Anglia forms a good buffer. The strain 1 vaccine is not yet licensed to use in the UK and won't be available unless we have any confirmed cases. There is great concern from members that this could cause a huge problem if the vaccination is only available in a protection zone, and have a disastrous effect on farmers in the region.

**Action -CC-** Letter from Forum to Hilary Benn to voice concerns.

**Action-All** - we should continue to advise our members/tenants/customers to be vigilant and report any suspected cases.

Bovine TB - There appears to be a hotspot in Beccles, Animal Health are working to identify the reasons for this and how to address it. Standard routine testing is conducted in this region at the present time and is done on traced animals (stock from areas where T.B has been identified).

There have been 11 cases up to July this year which is the usual annual figure. East Anglia cannot sustain itself commercially without buying stock in which may be compounding the problem. A recommendation from NFU and Animal Health on buying in stock will be issued in October.

JT – Farm crisis network did a report on the impact of TB.

**Action – PA( Animal Health TB team) and ABZ** – to circulate recommendation on buying in stock.

**Action -VP** - to circulate TB report.

VP- Neospora Caninium – What are the issues?

MM –It is a protozoan parasite infecting primarily dogs and cattle. The disease causes abortion and infertility in cattle. If the cow produces a live calf it will likely be weak or brain damaged. It will also affect milk yields. The recommendation would be to stop breeding if only small numbers are affected. If the animal contracts the disease and is not pregnant it may well show no signs of the disease at all.

There is no treatment currently available and it is the largest cause of cattle abortions in the UK.

**Responsibility And Cost Sharing workshops** - Alex Butler-Zagni

A joint industry and government working group has been set up to develop the body which will oversee responsibility and cost sharing.

Defra report that the group has been established in response to calls from the farming industry for it to have a greater say in the development of animal health policy, something which the government has long been committed to.

The Responsibility and Cost Sharing proposals would require primary legislation, with a draft Bill to be published before Christmas. The earliest the new body could come into operation would be 2012. For more details go to [www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/sharing/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/ahws/sharing/)

Members worried that Defra had underestimated the true cost of animal health, and also that there is a need to ensure that the new group is not just an advisory board but can also make policy.

**Action - CC** – to send latest details to VP for circulation.

## **LMAS - Amber Taylor**

Natural England has arranged a comprehensive programme of events in the East for the year including many joint events with ADAS, FWAG, RSPB, CLA, EBLEX and others, covering all aspects of Environmental Stewardship. The unit continues to work actively with livestock farmers and graziers in the region, most recently by issuing a contract for a number combining the environmental and conservation aspects of farming with the commercial side. These events will be delivered by ADAS and EBLEX. Any future ideas on joint working would be welcomed

## **John Reeves**

JR reported that all nature reserves in the eastern region, have found sufficient cattle numbers for management purposes, with more cattle turning up on the Ouse Washes weekly (now 2100 head) as other parts of the country run out of grass.

Riverside Beef Producers is now trading. It is now taking the first orders for a trial box beef scheme. Jon expressed his thanks to EBLEX, AQM and Suffolk Meat Traders who have 'been magnificent' in helping with development of the project.

The RSPB policy of blue tongue vaccination of all stock has been implemented with success across the region.

**Action – VP** to send link.

[www.gatetoplateconsulting.com/pages/riverside-beef.aspx](http://www.gatetoplateconsulting.com/pages/riverside-beef.aspx)

## **Grazing Exchange**

There are currently 60 people signed up to the grazing exchange, need to continue to promote the site and look for new ways to get the information out to people. VP is continuing to work with Jason Borthwick, and it was suggested that we also target auctioneers and hauliers.

**Action - All** – Continue to promote to members/tenants/ friends/customers

**Action- VP** – To look at auctioneers, hauliers etc ( Durrants, Geoffrey Bowls, Gays & Son, Savills, Cheffins, Strutts, Brown & Co)

## **A.O.B.**

**Action - VP** – To send round contact list – please ensure your details are correct.

## **Livestock and access**

AS – Problem with reported incidences of conflict with livestock and the general public, lots of publicity recently highlighting high profile cases . N.T. working to educate staff and visitors at their properties where they have grazing animals on site. Need for the NT to work closely with tenant farmers.

ABZ – NFU are also addressing this issue and will be launching new guidance.

AS – Have an obligation (duty of care as organisations) to educate walkers and the fact they may not always walk where they'd like.

VP – Countryside Agency has done work in the past. Need to look for different ways to educate people. Could look at regional events to get message out to families e.g. Suffolk schools fair, Norfolk spring fling, county shows, FACE

**Action –ALL-** any other ideas to AS

**Action- VP** to look at work the NE has done.

Alex – EEDA funding £175.00 Energy audit for dairy farmers available. Will show savings they can make and suggest best options for them. Funding is up to 50% of £20k for new changes.

**Next Meeting – Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009, NFU Offices, Newmarket. From 9.30 -12.30pm**