

FARMING DIARY OCTOBER 2014

For once, farmers aren't moaning about the weather! What a wonderful season we have had and what a relief to see the silage clamps full with forage for the winter. Last winter we were struggling to source extra supplies of organic silage and hay as our harvest was so poor, so it's good to know we won't face that additional cost and worry this year.



It's also a huge relief to be clear of TB for the time being, having had a clear herd test today (30th Oct).

The weather has also been kind to the cows calving out in the fields. Since 1st September we have had 175 calves born, all outside! Only a handful of these have needed assistance, and in most cases this was due to the calf coming backwards.



We have had a variety of dairy breeds born including New Zealand Friesian, Swedish Red & White and Montbeliarde; 70 of these are heifer calves and will be kept for herd replacements. The male calves, along with the beef breeds of British Blue, Limousin, Simmental, South Devon and Aberdeen Angus, are being sold to local beef farmers.

All calves get to suck colostrum (the first milk produced after giving birth) from their mothers which is high in antibodies and gives the calves a great start in life by boosting their immune system. They are then trained to suck an artificial teat and are introduced into a pen with 8 other calves to form a social group.

We have 45 left to calve and should finish by Christmas Day! We aim to let them all calve outside unless the weather suddenly turns very wet.

As the cows calve they are kept inside by night so we can include silage and concentrate in their diet to help with milk production.



We have been busy clipping the cows' tails to keep their udders clean, and also checking that each animal has both its ear tags intact. If one has been lost or damaged, we have to order a replacement to ensure we are meeting the conditions of the Rural Payments Agency.

Next month we look forward to telling you all about our exciting new cheese venture!
Alan and Donna Webber