



January is a month when all the tractors are in the sheds as it is not good husbandry for them to be on the land during the winter months.

Other parts of the country may be ploughing and/or drilling spring barley but not us, our land is too heavy. However, you only have to go to the other side of the A12 before the soil gets a lot lighter, and work carries on through the year.

We have been busy loading Oilseed Rape to send to ADM where the seeds are crushed and the oil is used in the manufacture of mayonnaise. The oilseed rape has been on a price and quality contract, where the price is £15/tonne more than the usual price. We have another 900 tonnes of wheat to move in March to animal feed mills at Kenninghall or Stradbroke.

The grain is not to be put in store for the long term but straight out to feed the pigs or chickens - enough to make sure there is a continuous supply. The grain has been in store here since harvest and the fans for conditioning are set so that they switch on automatically when the outside air temperature falls 5 degrees below that of the grain inside. This is to prevent insects hatching out and contaminating the grain.

We had 200 tonnes of barley (which has been sold) to load, to be moved in February. That didn't take too much time as one man can easily load 200 tonnes in a day. It will be destined for one of the local mills that makes chicken or pig food. Our two local mills are now 40 and 60 miles away. They work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all helping to make food cheaper. Forty years ago, our local mills were six and 13 miles away and we delivered it to them by tractor and trailer. Most of the wheat we grow is now grown for animal feed as our soil does not grow a good bread-making wheat.

The varieties of wheat that are good for making bread yield less and so it makes good sense to grow them on land that will produce that good bread-making wheat. The summer weather makes a difference - a sunny June and there will be lots of good quality bread wheats about. When it has been a poor summer, the millers will have to import wheat from other parts of the world to blend with our wheat. They know the quality they require and where they import it from will depend on the transport costs to get it to the UK.

The naked oats are going out at the moment to Lincoln where they are being cleaned for seed use this Spring on another farm. Naked oats are oats with no husk on them at harvest and are used for other uses including baby pig food and the oil is extracted for pharmaceutical uses like make up and Aveno shampoo!

The new seeds for sowing in March are arriving now which includes the beans, peas for freezing, naked oats, and linseed.

