

On the farm

The fine weather over the past few days has enabled us to apply the first dose of nitrogen to our [rape](#) fields and a few of our [wheat](#) fields. We put an even amount of this first dose over all the fields, but the second application will be a variable amount per field, according to satellite photographs. This information will be imported into the spreader, via a memory stick, to vary the rates of spreading across the fields. James, the driver does not have to drive at a specific speed, the spreader will know how fast he is driving as it is on GPS, and will apply the correct rate!



Last month I spoke to a local potato grower, who said that ware prices are going up, and indeed they have gone up by about £40/ton. We needed the price to go up, he said, which will mean that potatoes at least will pay this year. This may well be the only crop on the farm that does pay, with the exception of the naked oats and oil seed rape. Wheat at £100/ton does not pay and you only have to look in the fields while you are driving along to see how much farmers are relying on wheat to make a living these days.

The eggs that are sold in the shop locally are from Huntingfield free range hens, some of which are sold indirectly to the supermarkets. Recently he has been advised that there will be a purchase price reduction of 8p/dozen. This is due to the major supermarkets trying to compete with Aldi and Lidl. Just imagine - Tesco, Sainsbury's and Morrisons will have gone to every one of their suppliers asking for this price reduction. It could be that some of the smaller suppliers cannot afford to reduce their prices and so businesses may get transferred into larger hands - not what most of us want to see happen.

If the same happens to a manufacturing business, they may be able to keep their profit margin maintained if they can save in manufacturing costs, e.g. thinner steel or less paint on their goods, but that may well affect the quality of their product.

Wildlife

I am hearing, or seeing, signs of spring now every day. I think it is so wonderful that it all happens like it does. Does your life alter now that spring is appearing?

We notice it is happening but do we do anything different? The food we eat doesn't change, the supermarkets have seen to that. We used to look forward to new potatoes and the first strawberries but no longer, everything is available every day of the year. Here on the farm our life is still linked to the seasons, we plant and harvest every spring and summer.

Our wildlife changes its habits and food, and of course it can only rear its young during the summer months. Parents are not there to tell the youngsters what to do, it happens by instinct, a [Blue Tit](#) always nests in a hole, and a [Wood Pigeon](#) always lays two eggs on a flimsy platform of sticks. The biggest wonder of all of course is migration; how does that [Swallow](#) find its way to South Africa and back? I find all this fascinating and will never cease to marvel at it all going on. I have been trying to provide habitat for as much of that wonderful wildlife that we have around us, and I suppose most of you will have some of those same thoughts.

Our resident [Song Thrush](#) started singing on 21st February and last week I was hearing [Chaffinches](#) and [Great Tits](#) singing. I heard a [Blackbird](#) was singing on the 29th. I also hear one of our robins every morning when I walk the dog. Golden Plover have been passing through as they gradually work their way north.

The birds that go north and west don't have it so easy. They have to cross the Atlantic Ocean to Iceland and Greenland. They can't make that journey until they are fit and well fed. They also can't arrive before the food that they eat is available, but all this happens very quietly and usually on time. Isn't nature and wildlife amazing!

As the breeding season is nearly upon us, if we want to see a lot of birds, we have to breed a lot of birds. Providing moist energy rich food during the spring will certainly help birds to produce more young. As birds cannot take water to their young, the water has to be included in their food. You can help by providing them with [live mealworms](#) or [soaked sultanas](#).