

Contents:

Avian Influenza	2
Biosecurity	2
Poultry producers	2
Synthetic vitamins	2
Trading mature cattle as organic	3
Homoeopathy at Wellie level - course	3
Events	3
OF&G in the news	3
Evaluation Scheme	4
Licensees in the news	4

General News

Email Scam

We have been informed by several licensees that they are getting some very suspect email responses to adverts placed on the OF&G website. We have looked into these and found that they all follow a certain pattern whereby the person answering the advert offers to buy the goods, and pay by cheque – usually for a larger amount than the price quoted. The vendor is then asked to refund the difference, before discovering that the cheque is a fake, and thereby losing money. We suggest that you ignore any emails that you feel are 'not quite what they seem'. You are not required to give an email address when submitting an advert, but if you do, please read the note against the email box on the advert submission page.

Importance of correct postage amount

Can all licensees please make sure that they attach the correct postage amounts to mail sent to the OF&G office. If the postage is deficient the envelope is not delivered from the sorting office until the extra amount has been paid, which can delay delivery for up to a week.

Agronomy focus for organic winter wheat production

From Elm Farm Research Centre:

High productivity and high quality in winter wheat remain one of the key goals of organic agriculture research. The two major aspects are, on the one hand, knowing what to grow, and, on the other, knowing how to grow it.

Organic Farmers and Growers is part of a large consortium for a new project (LINK funded by DEFRA and industry partners*) on winter wheat agronomy. This new EFRC-led 3 year WheatLINK project started on the 1st of October 2005. The overall aim is to assess the effects of seed rate, drill arrangement, variety and clover bi-cropping on grain quality and quantity, but to do so in a way that highlights any interactions among the different aspects. For example, the effects of different seed rates may be dependent on the type of drill used, which might vary with variety. Particular attention will be paid to weed and nutrient management in winter wheat production. The research will compare mechanical weeding (which also encourages nitrogen release from the soil) with white clover inter-cropping (which provides weed competition as well as nitrogen accumulation) to determine the relative benefits of clover bi-cropping for weed management and nitrogen supply to the crop.

An important part of the project is to have direct input from farmers, agronomists and advisers at all stages. OF&G will be instrumental in directing the project developments, by ensuring efficient technology transfer with the project outputs directly benefiting the industry. Regular project updates and results will be given over the next 3 years.

* EFRC, SAC, Claydon Yieldometer Ltd., Grain Farmers PLC., Norton Organic Grain Ltd., OAMG, OF&G, OFF, Progressive Farming Trust, SAC Commercial, SOPA, Sheepdrove Organic Farm, Soil Association, SA Cert, Wakelyns Agroforestry

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Technical News for Producers

AVIAN INFLUENZA

Status of organic birds if the order comes to shut them in

The status of organic poultry in the event of an order to shut birds in is still not clear.

The EU Commission was to table a proposal that in the event of an AI outbreak it would permit organic poultry to be housed for up to 12 weeks without loss of organic status. The proposal also stated that where there was additional provision for access to a temporary structure attached to the poultry house with a floor area not less than half that of the house the organic status could be maintained beyond 12 weeks. The structure, referred to as a protected area, would need to prevent access by wild birds but provide poultry with light and air etc.

Several Member States were not able to support the proposal so it was withdrawn leaving us with no decision at this time. It is expected that this will be discussed again at the next meeting, which is taking place in March.

We have contacted Defra to find out what would happen to organic status in the event of an order to shut birds in. They have confirmed that if the UK orders birds to be shut-in before the EU have made a decision on organic status then they are likely to work with the 12 week scenario and would probably also adopt the extension of the 12 weeks where an additional protected area is provided.

We will do our best to keep you updated on this issue.

Biosecurity

Defra have asked us to remind you all of the following:

"We (Defra) would encourage all bird keepers to remain vigilant and maintain good biosecurity standards; feeding and watering under cover in order to minimise contact with wild bird populations, reporting of any unusual die off(s) and signs of ill health to their vet."

Poultry producers

Please be aware that after 7/5/06 there will be no more derogation's issued for non-organic poultry over 3 days of age.

From 1/1/2006 if you are buying in pullets hatched on or since 1/1/2006 they must be from flocks reared to the organic feed and veterinary standards. Confirmation of this management from the pullet rearer must be supplied with your derogation request. Derogation must be sought from and approved by this office for all non-organic or part-organic poultry prior to purchase and your request must be submitted on OF&G Record Sheet 21a.

Please note if you are wanting to bring in part-organic birds it is essential that you speak to your supplier and order the birds well in advance as it takes at least 21 weeks to rear a pullet.

If you are purchasing organic poultry, please ensure that you collect from the vendor an Organic Sector Livestock Transfer Document (OSLTD), OF&G Record Sheet 16.

Synthetic vitamins

The derogation allowing the use of Synthetic Vitamins A, D & E in the diet of ruminants had been due to expire on the 31/12/2005. Following consultations at EU level a decision has been taken to remove the expiry date of the derogation thus allowing the use of A, D & E to carry on.

Please note that as previously the use of these synthetic vitamins must be approved by the Certification Department beforehand.



Trading mature cattle as organic

Now that the over 30 month rule has been withdrawn we would like to remind all cattle producers to be aware of the status of your cattle. There is a difference between a truly organic animal that can be traded as organic and an animal converted for the production of organic milk or organic calves that cannot itself be traded as organic, these are referred to as Converted Breeding Stock.

Any cattle that were born to dams that were managed to the organic standards for at least 12 weeks before calving (this applies to cattle born from both dairy and beef cows), and have continued to be managed to the organic standards since then, should be eligible to be sold as organic.

Any animal that was originally non-organic and was converted as an organic dairy or beef cow (Converted Breeding Stock) is not eligible to be sold as organic.

If you are intending to trade in finished organic cattle these must be shown on your Certificate as either 'Beef Finished Cattle' or as 'Dairy Beef' under the heading 'Organic Livestock'.

If you have any queries please contact your Certification Officer.

Miscellaneous

Homoeopathy at Wellie Level – dates of next course

HAWL run a three day course specially designed for farmers who want to learn how to use homoeopathy on their own animals. Dates of next course are April 4th, April 25th and May 17th. It is being held at Duchy Home Farm, Tetbury, Gloucestershire. For more information see their website at www.hawl.co.uk or ring Trevor Adams MRCVS on 01458 831016.

Events this summer

Below is a list of shows/events that OF&G will be present at during this year.

Date	Show	Location
8 th /10 th June	Royal Cornwall	Wadebridge, Cornwall
2 nd /5 th July	Royal Show	Stoneleigh
24 th /27 th July	Royal Welsh	Builth Wells
11 th /12 th August	Royal Manx	Sulby, Isle of Man
21 st Sept	Dairy Event	Stoneleigh
October	Organic Farming Conference	Builth Wells

OF&G in the news

Its has been a busy couple of months for OF&G Chief Executive and our media office, with numerous demands for our opinions on a variety of issues. Because the company's profile is important to both OF&G and its licensees we try to participate in as many as possible. Here's a roundup of some of them:

(Dec 5) BBC Radio Four, interview re. 'part-organic' pullet rules; (Dec 22) ITV news, live interview re. organic sales figures; (Dec 22) BBC Radio Five Live, live interview re. organic sales figures; (Dec 23) BBC Radio Four, interview re. GMO level proposals from EU.

Also, for your interest, here's a list of some of the print publications we've been featured or quoted in during 2005 (some of them numerous times):

Farmers Weekly, Farmers Guardian, The Times, The Observer, Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, The Independent, Organic Life, Eurofood, The Farmer, Poultry World, The Ranger, The Scotsman, The Grower, Natural Products, Yorkshire Post, Jewish Chronicle, Farminglife.com, Hull Daily Mail, Shropshire Star, Meat Trades Journal, Farming in the North, FoodProductionDaily.com, Farmlife.com, Shrewsbury Chronicle.

We don't see all media coverage of OF&G so if you spot something in your area, we'd always be grateful if you'd let us know, or even send a copy.

OF&G Evaluation Scheme products

The following products have recently been accepted into the OF&G Evaluation Scheme as 'Product Approved for Use in Organic Systems' or 'Product Approved for Restricted Use, Derogation Required'

Category	Name	Supplier	Telephone	OF&G Status	Eval.Scheme Cert Expiry Date
Animal Health Product	Thermovite Plus	Probiotics International	01935 822921	Approved - Restricted	28/02/07
Plant Health Product	Bactolife	Biotechnica Services Ltd	0118 951 5605	Approved	30/09/06
Plant Health Product	Mycortex	Biotechnica Services Ltd	0118 951 5605	Approved	30/09/06
Plant Health Product	Bioflo	Biotechnica Services Ltd	0118 951 5605	Approved	30/09/06
Fertiliser	Organimate	Nutrimate Ltd	01772 641181	Approved - Restricted	31/08/06
Ingredients	Traditionally Harvested Sea Salt	Taviusa Ltd	00351 281 322179	Approved	30/09/06
Plant Health Product	Biosept All Clear	Natralys Ltd	0208 360 4234	Approved	30/09/06
Plant Health Product	Biosept Crop Gold	Natralys Ltd	0208 360 4234	Approved	30/09/06
Plant Health Product	Biosept Hydro Gold	Natralys Ltd	0208 360 4234	Approved	30/09/06
Plant Health Product	Biosept Rose Gold	Natralys Ltd	0208 360 4234	Approved	30/09/06
Fertiliser	Orgo Neem Cake	Millenia Agriculture Inputs Ltd	0208 970 2199	Approved	30/09/06

Licensees in the News

Conservation award for Poplar Farm

Pro-active work to boost numbers of threatened bird species has led to an award for OF&G licensee Andrew Charlton.

Andrew's Poplar Farm, near Kings Lynn, Norfolk, won the Jubilee Award for Conservation from its landlord, Norfolk County Council. The farm has seen a significant increase in finches, skylarks, grey partridge and more since embarking on its conservation programme. Andrew, who also runs a consulting business on agri-environment schemes, took on the 171-acre farm in 1999 when there were no landscape features other than ditches, being on the edge of the fens. Now, with 125-aces of the farm certified to produce organic cereals, potatoes and vegetables, there are willow hedges and 6-metre grassland field margins among the measures to improve the land as a habitat. OF&G would like to congratulate Andrew on his success.

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The Practical Organisation for Organic Certification

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