Winston Churchill Said…

...“When you are going through hell - KEEP GOING!”

That’s it, it’s tough out there but it will get better; keep going, do the best you can, phone us, we might be able to help.

- If you are short of forage - we can help
- If your crops are crap - we can help
- If you want to cut costs - we can help
- If you want to fatten lambs on grass - we can help
- If you want to grow better grass - WE CAN HELP!

You will be amazed at what we can do - grassland, stock, milk, arable or veg - we can help you.

Looking forward to 2013

Is it goodbye and good riddance to 2012? For a lot of people in the farming industry, it will be, but not everyone. We have some clients that have done really well with some yields of high quality wheat, plus potatoes making £400 per tonne and likely to go higher, but by far the majority have had a pretty poor harvest and now this autumn drilling has been decimated.

A few people tried to get into direct drilling for the first time, A BIG MISTAKE. After 6 applications of slug pellets, the establishment cost is now higher than min-till or ploughing, in fact the plough based system is probably the best. Talking with Neil Fuller, trial results are pretty useless with such yield variations within the plots. The long and short of it is IT IS A YEAR TO FORGET!

We need to move on, conditions will improve and quite a lot of re-drilling and spring drilling will be done. It’s better to be drilled into a good seed bed than risk poor crops that will cost you more to grow less.

It has been a tough year for us too, with first sales of all products coming to an abrupt end in the 1st week of October. We have been busy with maintenance and preparations for a very busy spring. We also realised that a lot of the forage is pretty poor quality and stock either do not like it (low palatability), will not fatten on it (low ME) and generally a poor quality feed, so we invented a NEW LIQUID FEED SUPPLEMENT.

Now even the poorest forage can be improved with only 1 litre per head (for beef or dairy cows), plus you can add more straw to eke out those low supplies. The Complex Liquid Feed is available NOW in IBC’s.

ASK FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Complex Liquid Feed added to poor quality forage.

Complex Liquid Feed options:
- Basic - 62% protein as non-protein nitrogen (NPN)
- Gold - 58% protein as NPN seaweed, minerals & vitamins
- Dairy - 22% protein as NPN, PLUS seaweed, minerals & vitamins

PRICES: From £375 per tonne (45p per litre)
For more information speak to your local Rep. or
Telephone: 01366 38 48 99

The Schmallenberg virus seems to be everywhere and is causing problems in all stock; abortions, dead lambs and milk production way down. There is no easy answer but your stock can combat it if they have a high mineral-rich diet. Make sure the selenium levels are adequate, this is the most powerful antioxidant and will boost your animal’s immune system. If you have not done so, do send in samples of forage for a full mineral and feed value test.

Schmallenberg is rife

DON’T FORGET!
The Oxford Real Farming Conference
Being held January 3rd and 4th 2013
Robert will be speaking on the 4th
Venue: Merton College - TS Eliot Theatre
BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL - contact:
www.oxfordrealfarmingconference.org

The future lies in

BIO-LOGICAL FARMING SOLUTIONS
Predictions

A year ago - (issue number 18), I talked about the 2012 phenomenon or “The Shift” theory; well, we are now in the middle of it, still more to come with floods, probably a tsunami to hit New York, or sea surges to test the Thames barrier and snow - lots of it!

But you will get through it; it is in these difficult times that we learn ‘the lesson of life.’ It has been, and still is, a damned difficult time with a crappy harvest, good prices but so what if you have not got much to sell, it hardly compensates. A more difficult drilling time with slugs eating everything, what is left is rotting in the fields. Potatoes and veg have been near impossible to harvest and many acres will be left in the fields. Prices for good quality potatoes will hit £1000 per tonne, but if you don’t have them, so what!

Wheat; I predicted £300 a tonne and it will make more than that, but only if you have some that will meet the spec - but what if you don’t?

Harvesting potatoes in Herefordshire, November 2012

Above:
Photo taken in November this year at a farm in Herefordshire. They were trying to harvest potatoes. The dark colour is nothing to do with our photography skills - or lack of, but due to the fog that descended early morning and just didn’t shift.

Mega-Bac

After many years of research and development, we finally have an alternative to fungicides – biological control via beneficial micro-organisms occupying the leaf, to prevent the pathogenic fungi gaining a foothold in your crop. It’s natural, it’s simple - and it works!

Mega-Bac is the range of beneficial natural micro-organisms that you can apply to your crop at similar growth stages to conventional fungicides, but now you add nutrition as well, keeping your plants healthy and disease free all year.

How it works: In conventional toxic rescue chemistry you use fungicides to wipe out any hostile fungi that might be on your crop, not only hostile but the beneficial as well, these chemicals are NOT selective. Many of them have a prolonged action but of course that depends on plant growth and disease pressure. We do know that the more nitrate nitrogen present the greater the toxic effect of fungi, especially stuff that causes Rhizoctonia, Fusarium, Leaf Blotch and so on.

Now instead of trying to KILL these organisms we will simply prevent them from getting into the plant in the first place. How? By inoculating the plant with a range of beneficial micro-organisms that will protect your plant, provide nutrition and out compete any pathogens that might be floating about.

It’s simple really, the Mega-Bac microbes will thrive on the leaf and there simply is “no room at the inn.” The pathogenic organisms simply cannot land and if they do they are consumed by the beneficial microbes.

Application rate: Apply 4 or 5 times through the growing season with the Complex range of plant growth stimulants starting early at T0 with 4 litres per hectare of Vita-fos. This will get your crop off to a fast clean start; we can now easily keep it clean with further applications at T1, T2, T3, or as necessary.

It’s low cost and more effective than conventional fungicides, Mega-Bac is not registered as a fungicide because it isn’t one. It is a plant growth stimulant with beneficial side effects. It also fixes nitrogen straight from the atmosphere, use with Vitaplex, Complex Foli-N and other RLF products as required.

Calcium is KING!

Too much is just as bad as too little; get it into balance with magnesium and potassium and many of the other soil problems will simply go away. There is a lot of concern now at the level and difficulty of controlling Black Grass. It grows best in low calcium, high potassium soils, fix your calcium and cut the potassium, or if you do need potassium, put it on for the crop and not to fix a soil test; even foliar apply and slowly Black Grass will become less of a problem, especially if you feed the soil by using cover cropping – but that’s another story.

Ag Slag is still an excellent product – only 1 tonne to the acre will supply lime plus 23 units of phosphate, plus magnesium, manganese and many more trace elements. A few people are ‘slagging it off’ (sorry, couldn’t resist that one) claiming it has iron in it.

Better Grass

This year it is especially important that you use the Better Grass Xtra to correct your soil pH, provide the calcium and ‘feed your soil’ results once again this year show pH’s going up by up to one whole point i.e. 5.4 to 6.4 and calcium levels going from 800 to 1400 in just one application.

You cannot possibly lime or slag your entire farm in the spring and you don’t need to – use Better Grass Xtra annually and you ‘never need to lime again’ - fix the soil in the top 2-3 inches just for the year. Now available with S.A.N (Stabilised Amino Nitrogen), so it really is the complete grassland fertiliser. It gets your grass growing early, before the clover kicks in and saves you an application.

For more information please contact the office.

Do book early as we have limited supplies.

01366 38 48 99

Bettergrass Standard and Bettergrass Magnesium are available in 1 tonne bags and are ideal in low magnesium or lighter, high pH soils – please send in a soil sample to check.
Of course it does, it is the residue of the iron ore and yes there is still iron in it, but the iron is in a completely UNAVAILABLE form - it is no more available than putting on a load of iron bedsteads!

The key to the success of basic Ag slag is the available calcium. Only 1 tonne will put on more available calcium than 2 tonnes of lime. We don’t just measure pH, we measure calcium and it is the calcium that we need to balance your soil.

As your soil calcium goes up your iron goes down pro-rata; basic Ag slag lifts the available calcium and the iron goes down - just look at your soil tests, high levels of available iron can be a problem and will ‘lock-up’ phosphate and some trace elements. Basic Ag slag releases these nutrients from your soil.

The other little known secret in Ag slag is the ‘para-magnetic’ value; plant roots are dia-magnetic. The soil needs to be ‘para’ (aligned), but in acid soils it is not. Ag slag aligns the soil ions making them attractive to your plant roots i.e. the soil becomes a positive and your plant roots are the negative. Positive (+) to negative (-) equals energy to make your grass grow.

The modern basic Ag slag is a good product and we always recommend it when you need to lime or you do not want to use Better Grass Xtra. It’s an excellent product for brassica crops and with an application of Bio-Mulch will stop Club Root. To find out more ask for technical leaflet.

Water is the ultimate solvent and since June this year, many people have had in excess of 40 inches of rain and some of you in excess of 100 inches. The rivers, streams and ditches are running deep brown, which means run off; even grassland is affected although much of the rain will ‘run off’ down the hill it is still penetrating down some 2 to 4 inches and it is taking out nutrients.

At the moment a soil sample taken from a water-logged soil will likely show pH of 7 but that is because water is H2O and the pH of water is around 6.4, however when it dries out and the oxygen is used by the microbes, the pH of 7 will drop like a stone – JUST BE AWARE. You will not grow high yields of good quality grass in acid soil conditions.

\[ \text{pH does not measure the need for calcium:} \]
\[ \text{pH} = \text{power of hydrogen} \]

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Soil testing using the ‘Albrecht’ method

There is much confusion about this type of soil analysis so let me simplify it. Professor William Albrecht studied at the University of Missouri where he worked on the problem of how to get more nitrogen fixed by legumes Alfalfa (Lucerne) and soya bean in some of the ‘heavy gumbo’ clay soils alongside the Mississippi river. He discovered that he got more nitrogen fixed and bigger crops when he added calcium to these soils, in spite of the fact that they were a pH level of 7.5+. The problem was they were, and still are; extremely high in magnesium and it was the magnesium that was kept the pH high.

Mr Neil Kinsey was a student under Professor Albrecht and on leaving university, Neil began his career as a soil fertility specialist and used the principles he learned from Professor Albrecht. I first met Neil Kinsey in 1995 and he subsequently came over here to help me get the soil fertility audit established in 96 and 97 when we toured the UK with Neil Fuller and gave farm meetings and soil digs from Somerset through to North Yorkshire.

Shortly after this, the name ‘Albrecht’ was taken by another company and registered as a trade mark. That was to ‘stop’ other people claiming their tests were to the ‘Albrecht’ standard. Since then and as we know now this simplistic cat-ion/anion – CEC – base saturation test is not sufficient to tell you what is really going on in your soil. It is often referred to as a mining assay - it tells you what is in there but NOT what is ‘available’ to your crop.

Since the turn of the century, we have used these principles to find out what is in your soil BUT we then carry out another ‘test’ that measures what is actually ‘available’ to your plant – so now we know what is in your soil, and from that we know what your crop can use. If there is plenty there but availability is low, we don’t need to add more we simply need to find out what is causing the ‘lock up‘. Fix that and your available levels will go up.

We have many instances where we have used simple methods to ‘balance’ the soil and then work on the biology and for 13 years or more NO phosphate fertiliser has been applied and levels are the same or similar to what they were in the beginning. If you need it, we will recommend it, but we will not waste money on so called fertiliser that does not, will not, cannot improve soil fertility.

Soil fertility is a lot more than an ‘Albrecht’ test, as good as it is. A fertile soil will have a healthy life, be full of beneficial micro-organisms and earthworms, building humus and feeding your crop.
Clues Across:
1. Nutrient-rich natural plant, many varieties, edible.
5. A better alternative to TSP - anagram
7. Element lately forgotten.
8. Compound derived from wood and plants.
11. Not a grassland farm - abbr.
13. Farm adviser
15. Grassland created by alternate husbandry
17. Prefix to 31 down
18. Outdoor enclosure for pigs
20. Legume
22. Imperial field measurement
24. Small land mass in middle of H₂O
25. See 25 down
27. Element
28. The best grass conditioner on the market!
33. Decayed plant or animal matter
34. 43,560² of these are in an acre
36. Small amount i.e. elements
37. Valuable oil, bain to allergy sufferers
38. Essential micro nutrient for growth and development
40. Female sheep
42. Crop grown widely but not often recognised as being one
44. Major plant nutrient
45. We have two, wheat has one.

Clues Down:
1. Cattle fodder
2. South African bovine antelope; Equestrian centre in Derbyshire
3. Needed to drive a farm vehicle - abbr.
4. Measure of fertiliser
5. Power of hydrogen - abbr
9. Old chemical company
10. Weather condition we’ve forgotten exists!
12. Search for food
14. Root fungi
16. Result after harvesting
19. Silt - anagram
20. Home of 20 across
21. Overweight show
23. Fundraising by Uni students and young farmers - abbr.
25. Roughly 2½ times 22 across
29. Gradually become emaciated
30. Largest compartment of cow’s stomach
31. See 17 across - remnants when water is removed.
32. Large group interested in fertiliser production.
35. Carbon material.
37. Unpopular food from a butchered animal.
39. Lump of earth.
41. Small clump i.e. hay or grass.
43. Element essential for good health in animals and humans.

BETTER GRASS Price List
For orders received before 31st January 2013

- BETTER GRASS STANDARD (Bags):
  - 26 to 28 tonnes: £250 p/tonne
  - 16 to 25 tonnes: £260 p/tonne
  - 8 to 15 tonnes: £270 p/tonne
  - 1 to 7 tonnes: £300 p/tonne

- BETTER GRASS MAGNESIUM (Bags):
  - 26 to 28 tonnes: £300 p/tonne
  - 16 to 25 tonnes: £310 p/tonne
  - 8 to 15 tonnes: £320 p/tonne
  - 1 to 7 tonnes: £350 p/tonne

- BETTER GRASS XTRA (Bulk Only):
  - Full Artic Load: £130 p/tonne
  - Full Rigid Load: £133 p/tonne
  - Add S.A.N: £40 p/tonne

Above prices are delivered only
Spreading can be arranged as required - POA

Mr R. Jones - Powys: “First time we had Better Grass Xtra with nitrogen in it – seemed to work. During March and April we had quite a flush of grass. One field we turned the sheep off in mid March and put them back on end of April. There was about 4” of grass on it.”

Mr E. Gibbons - Anglesey: “Good service, grass and other crops are looking very well each year. Yields have improved and cattle are fit and healthy.”

Mr P Blakey - Northumberland: “We are convinced the Better Grass has evened out the yield across the field, even poor areas have done well. Mineral analysis is quite spectacular.”

Aunt Aggie, she say: “Ha’you done your Crissmas shopping?”
Granfa he say: “I’m leaving it till tha’last minute.”
Aunt Aggie says: “Well wha’you doin tha’ for?”
Granfa says: “Acause then when I forget wha’people wanted, I shan’hev time to remember, and I won’hev to worry about it no more!”

Happy Christmas tergether everyone!