



Welcome to your Farm Cluster Newsletter

Here's what we've been up to in the last month - if you have any questions about the stories in this newsletter or suggestions for future articles, please contact: [Ross Wingfield](#) or [Christine Meadows](#).

Farm Cluster Annual 'Get-Together'

It was great to see nearly 30 people at the Bell in Ticehurst on the 31 January for breakfast. We had a quick round up of the past year's Farm Cluster events and projects. Then Colin Hedley, Farm Cluster facilitator of three clusters on the South Downs, gave us an interesting presentation.

The presentation

Colin stressed the importance of farmers joining together in farm clusters to share best practice, develop new ideas for farming and deal with the challenges that are appearing as the rest of society begins to understand the importance and difficulty of sustainable land management.

From his own experience of raising premium beef on rare grasslands, Colin eloquently expressed the commitment to land stewardship in farming families. But he challenged the group to ensure that they look outwards for new ideas and are able to demonstrate the flexibility needed in the new environmental land management world. His presentation slides can be viewed online: www.highweald.org/downloads/publications

The event was a great opportunity to discuss current farming challenges, answer management queries, register an interest in training events and propose projects.

Articles and reports:

[It's not what you eat, it's how it's produced that matters](#) Alex Hefron.

[If you want to save the world, veganism isn't the answer](#) Isabella Tree.

[Sustainable grazing strategies that meet ecological demands](#) Geraint Powell.

Books:

[Defending Beef - The Case for Sustainable Meat Production](#) Nicolette Hahn Niman.

[Grass-fed Nation: Getting Back the Food We Deserve](#) Graham Harvey.

Member news

Welcome to our five new members this month, Simon Hancock of Sorted Oaks Farm, Andrew Morton of Barden, Richard Waters of Squibs Farm, Stella and Doug Edworthy, and Tim and Cindy Llewellyn.

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Other news

- **Equipment for environmental management:** If you are interested in shared use of small-scale mowing and baling equipment to help manage your grassland, or any other equipment that helps with environmental management, please let Christine know by Friday 22 February.
- **Prince's Farm Resilience Programme:** We have secured free business skills training for family farms from this well-regarded programme, starting in September. There are spaces for ten family dairy or livestock farms. For more information visit the [website](#). To express an interest in joining, please contact Christine by 14 March.
- **High Weald Grassland Survey:** The High Weald is a refuge for rare, species-rich grasslands. We'd like to know what support land managers need to look after and restore this habitat. If you have grassland, please take a few minutes to fill in this survey to help shape future support in the area. Completed forms will enter a draw to win a crate of Harvey's beer: www.highweald.org/grassland-questionnaire. Survey deadline is Monday 18 February.

Free Farm Cluster Events

- **13 February, 9.30-2pm: Farm Profitability and Trees on Your Land** with pioneering agroforestry farmer Stephen Briggs. The Bear Inn, Burwash with lunch and a walk on adjoining farmland. [Book on Eventbrite](#).
- **14 February, 10-6pm: Sussex Lund Grants Programme 'drop-in session'** - an opportunity to find out more about this grants scheme and seek advice, e.g. with filling in the application form. Pop into the Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell - to book a slot contact Sam, details below.
- **27 February, 6.30-9pm: Meadows Survey 2018 feedback meeting** at The Bear Inn, Burwash. To include a presentation from Natural England's Field Unit. An opportunity to find out what the surveys revealed and to discuss grassland species and management. [Book on Eventbrite](#).
- **7 March, 10-12pm: Managing thick hedges and small woodlands – the role of tree shears.** With a practical demonstration of low impact equipment at the Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell. [Book on Eventbrite](#)

To book for the above events, follow the Eventbrite link where available, or contact Sam on 01424 723011, or samantha.nicholas@highweald.org

Other events

- **8-17 February: Big Farmland Bird Count.** To take part see: www.bfbc.org.uk
- **15 February: Opportunities in organic arable:** a Soil Association conversion webinar (online seminar) for farmers. Visit the [registration page](#).
- **26 February, 9am-1pm: Cover Cropping, Reduced Inputs and Profitable Farming** in Shepherdswell, Dover from FWAG and Affinity Water. With viewing of cover crop plots and a presentation from no-till farmer Andy Howard based near Ashford. [Book on Eventbrite](#) or call Paul Cobb on 07713 333160.

About

The Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster helps farmers, foresters and other land managers work together to improve farm profitability and benefit soil, water, wildlife and historic features not just on their individual farms, but across the area. It has 49 members covering over 3,500ha. The Cluster is helped by the High Weald AONB Partnership with financial support from Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund, the Environment Agency (Giant Hogweed control), and the Woodland Trust (deer management). Visit the Upper Rother & Dudwell Farm Cluster page at www.highweald.org