



Welcome to our August WHAg Mag

August came in with a heatwave and is now delivering exceptional storms and rain. Erratic weather - is this what we all have to get used to? We feel for farmers whose crops are now soaking in the fields. We see crops that two weeks ago were nearly ripe for harvest and are now in ground too sodden to support a tractor. 2020 continues to challenge us all in many ways.

But in spite of setbacks, farmers are a resilient bunch and in this WHAg resilience is our buzzword! Especially when dealing with:

Biodiversity loss - a great and informative article from our Chair, Lawrence Woodward

Biodiversity gain - a little taster of what's to come from Providence Farm in September. Keep an eye out for their mid month blog.

Persistent fluke in cattle - Meg's blog this month shows how they made headway with parasites, ditching the 'i-cides' and fostering resilience in their herd.

Our Tail and Finger WHAg feature this month talks 'floo' - ie wool - that warm, fluffy, fleecy stuff that we know so well. But is there more we can do with this amazing natural byproduct which is so often dismissed as 'waste'?

And finally! Resilience is certainly something you farmers are able to develop in your animals judging by the responses to our Alternative Approaches to Livestock Health Survey. Did you miss the Survey deadline? Not a problem as we've kept it open due to popular request. And we have a whole new set of prizes.

Enjoy this month's WHAg Mag and the rest of the (hopefully dry) summer!

The WHAg team

What's happening on the WHAg Poll

Do take our Poll this month as it's a subject close to many of our hearts:

Are you concerned about antibiotic usage in the food chain?

88%

voted in July that..

'Public money for public goods' support payments should include specific organic and whole farm options'



The Ecology of Health

Why biodiversity loss could be making us sick



Every month, sometimes every week there is a new report on 'health' and the need for new initiatives. Most get it wrong and when they do get something right, it seems to be by accident.

A recent one from the 'think-tank', Demos, is no exception. It's called **'Turning the Tables'** and has a sub-heading **'Making healthier choices easier for consumers'**. It contains some valid recommendations about making unhealthy choices more difficult to access but its thinking "tanks" badly because it hasn't got a clue what a positive healthy choice might be!

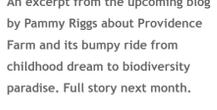
However, in happy contrast, another recent report highlights a whole body of research work, observation and thinking which does this and, for us at least, improves our understanding of how that new buzzword - the micro-biome - can be viewed from a Whole Health Agriculture perspective.

A new WHAg article explores this and why 'biodiversity loss could be making us sick'. [Read more....](#)

The Bumpy Road to Success

Returning one Devon meadow to its former glory

An excerpt from the upcoming blog by Pammy Riggs about Providence Farm and its bumpy ride from childhood dream to biodiversity paradise. Full story next month.



'During our thirty year tenure' writes Pammy, 'This little piece of Devon has changed dramatically. We bought one large 18 acre ryegrass, tractor-rutted field with silage wrap ground down into the mud and we turned it around.'

Our restoration, possibly termed rewilding nowadays, continued by reducing fertility in the lower field over time, making life difficult for ryegrass which was shunted out by a wide variety of native plants.

Taking a once a year cut of grass post seeding, we watched it slowly revert to the original habitat, Culm Measures as it is called in our area, with the indicator species the Marsh Fritillary butterfly. We have seen them and are fortunate to have contiguous wildlife friendly plots, a small stream, a tribute of the aptly named River Deer, and bushy Devon hedges to join up the dots for our wildlife.' More next time folks!

Just a Fluke?

Developing resilience against a persistent pest



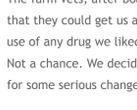
Meg Walters shares her experience of dealing with fluke despite wet Peak District pasture land and flukicide-pushing vets.

"There is no doubt that fluke is responsible for serious economic losses in the farming industry, but what if eradication is never possible?"

Fluke infestation in livestock can be fatal, causing weight loss, anaemia and general liver damage. Fluke infection is hard to detect. The best way is combined blood and faecal testing - although a definitive result isn't possible until postmortem, and this is generally how the farm here first knew there was a problem. PM results from slaughter would show mature fluke in the liver.

When we arrived here the cattle were already housed for winter and had been doused with flukicide as per their normal routine and veterinary recommendation. The farm vets, after boasting to us on their first herd health visit after we arrived that they could get us a derogation (permission from the certifying body) for the use of any drug we liked, encouraged us to ramp up the treatment protocol.

Not a chance. We decided the only way to make headway with these parasites was for some serious changes in husbandry. [Read more....](#)



Finger WHAg of the month....

Q: What is warm and soft, fluffy and insulating, comes in an array of shades, is totally biodegradable and made entirely from grass?

A: WOOL, wonderful wool!

It's a disgrace that this amazing resource is totally underused. Farmers have to shear their sheep but with little opportunity to sell the fleeces.

[Read more](#)



Tail WHAg of the month....

Goes to a woolly success story. Farmer Simon Bland of Dalesfoot Composts in Cumbria has an established business combining bracken with wool to make peat free compost. Sales have soared during lockdown so he's on the lookout for wool & baled bracken.

[Read more](#)

On the subject of wool...

Time to think beyond just knitting. British Wool, a resource to connect buyers and sellers, are supporting a petition for British Wool to be used in all public financed building projects.

[Click here](#) to sign the petition.

There are also some great initiatives out there:

Woolsack show where you can buy fleece, yarn & other wool products from those flocks of sheep in the UK that are kept solely to supply wool.

[Read more....](#)

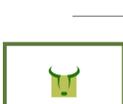


chimneysheep.co.uk make excellent use of wool by selling garden goodies; mulches, hanging basket liners, slug repellents, and other weird and wonderful items.

[Read more...](#)

Surely it must be time for wool to go field scale: Weed suppressant? Fleece covers? Has it happened on your farm already? Tell us more, we'd love to know!

Email to: secretary@wholehealthag.org or, message us at: [m.me/wholehealthag](https://www.instagram.com/m.me/wholehealthag)



Survey snippets

"Observation of the whole animal is important; treatment of the whole animal, not just illness or injury.

Spending time being mindful with them is a very important part of healing and maintaining good health.

A stress free animal is a healthy one."

"I use homeopathy A LOT during lambing, and it makes a huge difference to the health and survival rate of my flock".

[Take our survey](#)

"What helps you persevere is your resilience and commitment."

— Roy T. Bennett, The Light in the Heart

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