

## **Future Farming: New Round of Farming Equipment and Technology Fund Grants**

DEFRA has announced that it will be making more than £168 million available to farmers in another round of grants this year to promote innovation, animal health and welfare, support food productivity and to protect the environment. Part of the Farming Investment Fund, the **Farming Equipment and Technology Fund** offers farmers, foresters and growers in England grants between £1,000 and £25,000 which contribute to the cost of equipment or technology from a specified list. The Farming and Equipment Technology Fund is split into two groups; **Productivity and Slurry** grant and **Animal Health and Welfare** grant, with the former now open for applications until 4 April and the latter due to be open in March.

The **Productivity and Slurry** grant aims to improve sustainability in agriculture, forestry and horticulture whilst maintaining productivity through the use of technology to reduce inputs, emissions and waste. For example, the grant can subsidise the partial cost of direct drills, rainwater harvesting tanks and mulchers. **The Animal Health and Welfare** grant aims to improve the health and welfare of livestock using technology to reduce biosecurity risks or stress to livestock. For example, the grant can subsidise the partial cost of livestock handling systems, temperature or dust sensors, feeder systems or apparatus to name a few. Both grants work by giving each item a score based on how closely it meets the aims of the scheme. Those interested should visit the DEFRA website for further information on how to apply as soon as possible as the first round of funding was heavily oversubscribed. Only purchase items once you have been successful in your application and use the receipt to claim the reimbursement. Do get in touch with us at **Adkin** on **01235 862888** should you require any assistance in respect of grant funding.



## **Mental Health in the Farming Community**



The Farm Safety Foundation, also known as Yellow Wellies, ran their annual Mind Your Head mental health awareness campaign this month from the 13 to 17 February. They reported that 94% of UK farmers under the age of 40 agree that poor mental health is one of the biggest hidden problems facing agriculture today. This is sadly not surprising as the agricultural industry has faced unprecedented challenges in the last three years, from the COVID-19 pandemic to the war in Ukraine driving costs up, as well as policy uncertainty amid the withdrawal of the Basic Payment Scheme. When economic pressures, future uncertainty and an industry where the lifestyle can be isolating all combine, it can be hard for farmers to feel as if they are able to cope, leaving them vulnerable to mental health issues. Nine out of ten young farmers believe that mental wellbeing and farm safety are linked, which could indicate why UK farming has such a poor occupational safety record as those struggling with poor mental health are less likely to consider their safety when working and taking risks, according to the Farm Safety Foundation's own studies.

Seeking support in an industry where the lifestyle and work itself can be isolating may feel daunting, however it is essential to reach out to someone and know you are not alone. National charities, organisations and helplines are on hand to offer farmers mental health support and other advice. Alternatively, reach out to family, friends or other members of the local farming community to start a conversation about how you are feeling.

**Reminder: Basic Payment Scheme 2023 Claim Window Opens 14 March**

## Increasing Pressure on the Private Rented Sector



The private rented sector in England is under increasing pressure as the demand for rented homes soar against dwindling supply. Rightmove reports that rents outside of London had hit record highs at the end of 2022 to £1,172 per calendar month, with a further 5% rise expected in 2023 if demand continues to outstrip supply. The number of people enquiring about private homes to rent has increased by almost a quarter since the end of 2021, which can in part be attributed to the increase in interest rates putting would-be homebuyers off until mortgage rates begin to fall. Locally, rents advertised on Rightmove in Oxfordshire average £2,150 per calendar month and it is reported that Oxford city itself is one of the most unaffordable places to rent privately in England.

Industry experts predict that 2023 will see availability of private rented homes reduce further as landlords decide to sell due to upcoming policy changes. Landlords may be unable to afford property energy efficiency improvements as the requirement to have a minimum energy efficiency rating of a C by 2025 for new tenancies, looms. Others may be inclined to sell up due to the Renters Reform Bill which incorporates the removal of no-fault evictions, the increase

in tax on property income or rising interest rates causing cash flow problems. Any, or indeed all, of these factors may be enough to push landlords to sell, causing demand for private rented housing to remain untenable. Lettings agents have experienced the effect this has on those desperate for private rented homes. Agents are being offered months of rent upfront, higher rents than advertised and prospective tenants willing to take on the tenancy without any kind of viewing. This can leave tenants vulnerable to landlords seeking to maximise profit margins and equally, landlords in the dark about who will be living in their property.

At Adkin we recommend those interested request to view a property before committing to rent it to avoid any surprises, and for landlords or their agents viewings are a great opportunity to meet prospective tenants.

## Managing Condensation and Mould

Since the inquest into the death of Awaab Ishak and the rise in energy bills causing the majority of consumers to turn down their heating, the increasing issue of mould in UK properties has been brought to the forefront of householders' minds.

Moisture can occur in your home through various household activities which produce steam or water vapour, such as showering, bathing, cooking and drying clothes. As the air temperature drops, the moisture in the air creates condensation which appears on cold surfaces and in poorly ventilated areas, such as windows, corners and behind furniture. Condensation does not create a "tidemark" on paintwork as damp does but can cause mould growth due to the moisture. If you have mould in your home without any signs of leaks or damp, then the mould is likely caused by condensation.

Householders are advised to clean mould off surfaces as soon as possible, preferably with a fungicidal wash, however this will not stop the mould from returning as the only lasting way to avoid severe mould is to reduce the level of condensation by heating and ventilating your home.

There are different things you can do to help:

- Reducing the amount of moisture produced in your home, for example by drying clothes outside where possible and keeping lids on pans whilst cooking.
- Ventilating your home so that moisture can escape, for example opening windows or vents after a bath or shower, using an extractor fan whilst cooking, showering or bathing and not blocking off any vents. On dry days outside, open several windows throughout your home to promote a flow of fresh air, even if it is for a short time.
- Improving air circulation by leaving gaps between furniture and walls.
- Wiping condensation off windows.
- Keeping indoor temperatures to at least 18°C and in particularly cold weather, keep the heating on low throughout the day.

It is important that you always advise your landlord or agent if mould or condensation is a problem in your rented property so that steps can be taken as necessary.

