Future goals  By Ed Clague, Agricultural Policy Manager

With the first Countryside Care payments made, subvention in place, tenancy legislation updated, marketing association structures modernised and a range of other initiatives now in action (such as beef contracts and support for marketing initiatives) the Department, farmers and processors have made tremendous progress in implementing the Policy for Manx Agriculture which was approved by Tynwald in April 2008. Efforts are now switching to implementing the other aspects of the plan. Seeking an extension to the red meat derogation and implementing a local food marketing plan. Page 3 lays out the key objectives for the next year. Generally, the Department’s focus moves from establishing a robust framework for the industry, to raising awareness and assisting farmers and processors to make the most of opportunities available.

Manx Food Fayre and Woodland Discovery Success

DAFF was pleased to host the second Manx Food Fayre and Woodland Discovery which was held at Garey ny Cloie Gardens on Tynwald Day. Over a thousand people visited the event to find out more about local produce. Top quality food producers attended in a marquee in the gardens with surrounding activities. Using local produce is so important, with rising fuel costs and pollution it makes sense to buy local. This event has firmly linked Manx food to our national day.
Minister’s comments

I am delighted to be able to welcome Dudley Butt, MLC and David Cannan MHK as new political members to the Department. I know that both Mr Butt and Mr Cannan will relish their new roles having been involved in the Department previously. Mr Butt has taken responsibility for both Wildlife and Fisheries Divisions and Mr Cannan is assisting me in Agriculture and other aspects of the Department’s work.

I was sorry to see our outgoing political members, David Callister, MLC and David Quirk, MHK depart. They have both worked closely with the Department covering all aspects of its work during their time with us. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank them both for all their hard work and commitment whilst with the Department and wish them both well in their new roles.

Eamon O'Donnell retired as Chief Government Vet at the end of June. Under Eamon’s leadership, the Animal Health Division has made a great contribution to Manx Agriculture. A visit by Animal Health may not always be welcomed, however, we must all agree that the work of the Division is essential and one without which we could not operate as a commercial agricultural Industry. Many of Eamon’s achievement may have gone unnoticed; however, this does not mean they were not valued. For example, it was Eamon’s personal intervention in Brussels that ensured that Manx Farmers were able to continue to export to mainland Europe when Great Britain was in the grip of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001 and we were subsequently able to use this precedent in 2006. Had Eamon not achieved this, the outcome for Manx Agriculture would have been disastrous.

I would also like to congratulate Shaun Dean on his appointment as a Director of Isle of Man Meat. I know Shaun to be a thoughtful and committed farmer and I am confident Shaun will make a valuable contribution to the operation of the Company.

The first payments from the Countryside Care Scheme have now been made and progress towards implementing all the recommendations of the Policy For Agriculture approved by Tynwald in April 2008 are well underway.

The one remaining area still to be tackled is seeking an extension to the current read meat derogation which expires at the end of 2010. The decision to extend the derogation in 2006 stated that the current derogation was to be extended for the last time to allow for the restructuring of the sheep meat and beef industry. I am proud of what we have achieved since 2006 and I believe agriculture in the Isle of Man is now well placed to operate in a freer market. However, many of the changes we’ve introduced now need to be implemented.

The Dairy sector is struggling at the moment and the collapse of Dairy Farmers of Britain and demonstrations by farmers across Europe highlight that this is an international problem. The first draft of the report into the Manx dairy Industry by Promar has now been delivered and we are considering it carefully to see what action can be taken to assist.

I was delighted to hear that IOM Meat achieved its highest sales of meat in the last 12 years during TT, with shops running out of stock and staff having to work overtime to satisfy demand. The ability of IOM Meat to quickly run an extra shift and meet demand clearly demonstrates the advantage of having a sustainable, self-reliant Isle of Man red meat sector. It also highlights the advantage to consumers of not being subject to the problems of an extended supply chain.

Finally, I am hoping for good weather for both the Agricultural Shows and I hope you will take the time to visit the Department’s Stand at both events. I look forward to meeting you and receiving your feedback on progress and listening to your ideas and suggestions.

Hon Phil Gawne MHK
Shirveishagh
So what’s next . . .  By Ed Clague, Agricultural Policy Manager

The last 12 months has seen a period of concentrated focus on the Countryside Care Scheme (CCS), as the Department and industry have discussed how the Scheme should run and put all the elements in place to make it operate. This effort has paid off, and whilst much work behind the scenes is still being completed, I believe we have implemented a robust Scheme on time and with minimal disruption to the industry.

It is important to remember that CCS is not the full solution for a vibrant Agricultural industry, and whereas several other important steps, such as subvention, have been put in place, there are still more steps to be implemented in order to ensure Manx farmers have the greatest opportunity to prosper.

Derogation

Our ability to limit the import of beef and sheep meat is scheduled to expire on 31 December 2010; unless the Department is successful in persuading the European Commission to extend the Derogation. When the Derogation was granted in 2006 the Commission made it quite clear that it was extended for the last time to allow the sheep and beef industry to restructure. The rate of change that has occurred since 2006 is arguably the greatest Manx Agriculture has ever witnessed. While key elements of the strategy are now in place, these changes have yet to bed in completely and a further extension would enable this to happen.

The leadership of the European Commission is likely to change following the recent European Elections, and senior positions are unlikely to be established before the autumn; therefore, an approach before then would be ineffective. Over the summer, the Department will be working with the industry, DAFF’s legal advisors, and DEFRA to establish the best possible case to present to the European Commission. Our moral case for an extension is strong as we have implemented changes here in 5 years, which took 15 years in Europe. However, given the Commissions’ stated position, any expectation of an extension to the derogation must be low.

Marketing

The marketing of local produce has increased, and improved significantly over recent years. The research undertaken by the Marketing Society in 2008 highlighted that the I Love Manx campaign was well recognised by Island residents: the message of fresh, local and seasonal was understood. The campaign has also been very successful in highlighting the importance of agriculture to the broader community.

Over the next 12 months, the challenge will be to create a framework whereby quality Manx produce is readily recognised. A Food Marketing Plan which defines how Government can support processors and producers alike, is essential. Issues, such as what is Manx food will need to be addressed. For example, if a beef burger is made by a Manx butcher from Irish beef should that burger be classified as Manx? Likewise if a local product is seasoned with exotic spices, is it legitimate to call that Manx too? We need to develop a Manx quality mark which allows consumers to differentiate between Manx produce that was grown, harvested and manufactured here from a Manx manufactured product with imported components (and the range of products in between).

Can Do culture.

Farmers are well practised at responding to change. Past experience shows that when a market develops or incentives are made, farmers are quick to make the most of the opportunity. Nevertheless, the current pace of change is rapid; we must all take steps to ensure we respond quickly and co-operate across the food chain. The Department is eager to encourage a greater level of integration across the whole food chain. The work of Isle of Man Meat’s supply committee, in the development of supply contracts, is a good example of how farmers, by working together with processors, can improve returns.

The recent reports by SAC into the Milling Wheat Sector, and Promar in the Dairy sector, both challenge the way we operate. It is important that these reports are carefully considered, and implemented where appropriate.

We hope to introduce grants this autumn to assist people to see best practice elsewhere; returning to raise the awareness of these practices to those back home. In addition, we will look at the Farm and Horticultural Improvement Scheme, to see if the incentives provided to assist farm businesses can be widened.

Whole Farm reviews will also be launched by the Advisory Services this autumn. This will give farmers the opportunity to have a free independent review of their business and benefit from a fresh set of eyes.

Confidence

Periods of change are unsettling and create uncertainty. The benefits of the changes made are now showing results. Agriculture is now a global business, with even the smallest shops stocking produce from Africa and Asia. More change is inevitable, but Manx Agriculture is now better placed than it has been for a long time in order to operate and prosper in this global industry: it is important we continue to move forward.
Work on uncultivated or semi-natural land

As Cross Compliance inspections and summer season work gets underway, it may be helpful to focus on Standard 14 of the Standards of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition. This deals with the protection of habitats, wildlife areas, non-productive landscape features and archaeological sites. Details are given in the Farmers’ Handbook, Chapter 6, pages 25 to 27 and 32.

The Standard gives guidance on a process to follow, if you are planning to undertake certain work on specified areas of land. Most importantly, this work requires DAFF approval before the work is carried out; otherwise, you could be in breach of this Standard and face losing payment from the Countryside Care Scheme. Please follow the process set out in Farmer’s Handbook, Chapter 6, page 32. The Works Approval form, plus Guidance Note, is now available from the Department, or can be downloaded from: http://www.gov.im/daff/countryside

Other legislation also applies to such land and you will need to contact the relevant Departments before undertaking work. Details are covered in the Farmer’s Handbook.

Standard 14 applies to uncultivated and semi-natural land, which includes rough grazing, woodland, scrubland, heath and moorland, wetlands and species-rich grasslands. Definitions include:

• Rough grazing, heath and moorland - land which is unimproved (no liming or fertilising and has not been cultivated in the last 12 to 15 years) and is of low value in terms of the livestock numbers per acre which it can support. Typically there would be less than 30% ryegrass, and/or white clover, and it would contain dwarf shrubs.

• Scrubland - where at least 20% of the canopy cover is made up of trees and shrubs, such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Hazel, Holly, Gorse or different types of willow.

The type of work that requires approval from the Department before it is undertaken is detailed in the Farmer’s Handbook, Chapter 6, page 32. Please note: drainage work on the land described above will require both DoT Land Drainage Division and DAFF approval, if there is a watercourse already associated with the field. The definition of “watercourse” is very broad and is given in the Farmer’s Handbook, Chapter 6, page 27. If there are no watercourses and you want to put in land drainage, you will only need approval from the Department.

Managing hedges

Please be aware that you need to follow the Manx Hedgerow Management Code of Best Practice, in order to meet your Cross Compliance Standards. The Code does not prevent you from cutting hedges, but it does mean that, in most cases, you need to schedule the work between 1st September and the end of February. The reason for this is that hedgerows are important as nest sites for birds and nests are protected under the Wildlife Act 1990. Hedgerows and their margins are also important as a food source for both adult and young birds and the loss of these has led to the serious decline of species such as the Grey Partridge and Yellowhammer. The later that hedges are cut the better, because this allows birds to make use of the seeds and fruits through the winter months.

During the non-cutting months, hedges can be trimmed using hand tools. Thus, farmhouse garden hedges can be trimmed anytime but not hedges along lanes between fields where a flail or tractor mounted cutter is required. The Code also allows for hedges to be cut for safety purposes, for example, to improve sight lines when exiting onto a road. However, the Countryside Care Scheme does not require hedges to be cut annually. If you do not need to trim them for agricultural or Health & Safety purposes, you can let them grow on for a year or so. A review of the Code is planned, with the aim of having an updated version in place for the start of 2010.

Plastics and tyre disposal

The Department is working closely with DoLGE’s Waste Management Unit and MNFU to set up a one-off Scheme in order to help farmers deal with the problem of clearing a back log of waste plastics (including silage wrap) and tyres. Details will be sent to all farmers as soon as more information is available. In the meantime, the Department suggests that you collect all waste tyres in one place and collect all your plastics into tote bags, storing them safely and tidily. These arrangements will be accepted for Cross Compliance purposes and will not lead to the imposition of any penalties. Burning plastics and tyres on the farm should be avoided as this will pollute the environment and is a health hazard for the fire handler. Please note: you still need to adhere to existing arrangements for the disposal of hazardous waste. If you have any plastic containers/bags on your farm that contain chemicals or materials that could be hazardous (eg liquid pest killers) these should not be emptied and stored with other plastic waste. Hazardous liquids and chemicals can cause serious harm to human, animal and plant life - please contact SITA on 695260 Option 2, for advice on what to do about these wastes.
The future’s profitable; the future’s farming!

By Chris Kneale, Agricultural Adviser

EBLEX figures published in December 2008 indicated that for 2008 the top third of livestock producers were at least breaking even with some making profit before single farm payment (SFP), for 2009 this improving profitability trend was predicted by the DAFF advisory service to continue with an increasing number of business enterprises breaking even and making profit before SFP. Recent analysis of the beef price Vs fertiliser, feed and fuel prices indicate that this is certainly the case at Knockaloe with the margin per acre increasing by £16 over 2007-2008 figures. (£143 to £159)

Margins now are as high as they have been for the last 6 years, without taking into account the improved production efficiencies and increased slaughter weights. The average cattle slaughter weight for the industry is up on the year by 3kg per animal which, valued at today’s market value (263 p/kg) is worth an extra £7.89 per head. Prices have risen on average 33p/kg over the last year - worth a further £96 per head.

Already beef producers are £104 per head better off than this time last year, add in the lower Fertiliser, fuel and feed prices that faced the industry and producers should be returning improved margins over last year.

Lamb prices are also up and producers ought to be generating better margins than those received last year. The industry’s average weight is up by 0.2kg which to the industry is worth approximately £23,232. Prices paid are also up by 53.6p/kg for the year 2008-2009 over 2007-2008. For an average carcass of 18kg this is worth and extra £9.65 per carcass. Reduced feed and fertiliser costs will again increase margins, reinforcing the increased profitability projections for 2009.

Yet what lies ahead? Prices appear to have stabilised suggesting that a point has been reached where consumers will pay no more and retailers are not willing to reduce their margins - supply and demand are finely balanced. For the producer, now is the time to improve efficiency. Often, there is greater opportunity to improve margins by implementing changes and improving efficiency within a business than it is to wait for an increase in market prices.

Farming for the future demands profit and the futures certainly looks profitable.
DAFF Divisions on Show

Agriculture Division will be explaining the various tasks that it is undertaking to deliver benefits to Manx farmers and agriculture over the next year or so. These activities relate to the “Seven Steps” identified in the Vision for Manx Agriculture approved by Tynwald in 2008. If you would like to know more about any of the following, staff will be on hand to help - and to talk about food and farming in general.

- Marketing support to the food industry, to promote the use of Manx produced meat, dairy products, milling wheat, fruit and vegetables.
- Production of a Local Food Action Plan including a labelling scheme to help consumers identify Manx products.
- Changes to the Agricultural Tenancy Act.
- Working group to plan and deliver a case to extend the Island's red meat derogation.
- Extra finance for organic production.
- Trials work at Knockaloe and Farmers meetings.
- Farm plastics and tyre disposal.

For further information telephone 687304.

Fisheries Division staff will be on hand to answer queries relating to inland and sea fishery matters, including licences for freshwater fish and hobby crab and lobster catching. Find out about visits to the Fish Hatchery at Cornaa which is open to visitors every Wednesday of the summer and Easter school holidays. Admission is free of charge, and the hatchery is particularly popular with children, who are able to feed the trout being reared. At the Shows, there will be tanks of freshwater animals to see and colouring sheets to entertain young visitors. The Division takes a proactive role in protecting Manx fisheries by maintaining the long term sustainability of stocks and the environment that supports them. A number of initiatives are currently underway to achieve this, including a river management project to promote best practice in the management of the Island’s water courses and a marine research programme designed to provide the Department with sound management advice. Staff will be happy to answer questions about this aspect of their work.

For further information telephone 685387.

Find out about the wide range of Manx timber products produced by the Forestry Division, including many of use to farmers. Staff will be available to answer queries about tree planting grants, woodland management and the Heath Burning Code. Information will also be available on the recreational opportunities offered by the Islands 17 national glens and the Tynwald National Park. The National Park celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2009, and was originally conceived to commemorate the millennium of Tynwald. It was opened on the 26th June 1979 and covers an area of 30 acres. It features less common trees and shrubs in the lower parts, with native and naturalised plantings represented in the Northern and Eastern areas. A series of display boards placed at selected points within the park, explaining the history and development of the site, have been erected to commemorate the first 30 years of the of the area and can be seen during the summer months.

For further information telephone 801263.
DAFF Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry

At this year’s Shows, the Division will be explaining the practicalities and benefits of the Island becoming a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Everyone has a part to play in this including farmers for whom there would be more incentives for conservation management. The Wildlife and Conservation Division’s primary role is to conserve natural habitats and important native species under the Wildlife Act. This is carried out through the designation of land with high nature conservation value and assisting land managers by offering advice and funding through management agreements.

We will be demonstrating “BITS on-line” at the agricultural shows. It provides farmers with the opportunity to advise us of births and movements by computer. Many keepers are recording births, movements and deaths online already (Over 8,612 animals have been registered on-line to date).
If you register for BITS on-line, you gain further benefits.
You can:
- View and print all animals present  
- Sort and filter the animals to show (for example)

Another important aspect of the Division’s work is its responsibility for the marine environment. In October, it began a public consultation process to designate a Marine Nature Reserve in Manx waters and as the site selection process evolves there will be plenty of opportunities for the Manx community to contribute their knowledge, ideas and views.
For further information telephone 843109.

DAFF Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry

Animal Health Slaynt Vein

Animal Health is the “bedrock” upon which all animal orientated agriculture is based. Trade in animal products, and the healthy maintenance of our national herd and flock, both depend on the provision of statutory disease control measures by the Division.

One of these measures is the tracing of cattle through individual ear tags and passports. We will be demonstrating “BITS on-line” at the agricultural shows. It provides farmers with the opportunity to advise us of births and movements by computer. Many keepers are recording births, movements and deaths online already (Over 8,612 animals have been registered on-line to date).
If you register for BITS on-line, you gain further benefits.
You can:
- View and print all animals present  
- Sort and filter the animals to show (for example)

If you use BITS on-line exclusively, for all your information, then you are not obliged to use a movement book - a chance to reduce your paperwork!
To learn more about Animal Health’s role in traceability, please visit our stand at the forthcoming agricultural shows or visit www.gov.im/daff or telephone 685844.

Special Guest Stand

Ronaldsway Met Office

Ronaldsway Met. Office (DOT, Airports Division) are proud to provide a professional but friendly and cost-effective service to help and advise the local agriculture industry. Many calls come from fishermen, farmers, growers, market gardeners and those involved with horticulture, floriculture, agrochemicals, transport and supply. Several callers obtain updates on a daily basis and, although most are based on the Island, some come from areas bordering the north Irish Sea. The vast number of repeat callers is a testament to the availability and quality of the service and advice. The staff enjoy the interaction and feedback from the industry. By understanding the issues, products and climate the forecasters generally enjoy the challenge of giving timely information through accurate, reliable and easy to understand weather reports. Delivery of the service is by telephone (including recordings), fax, e-mail and the web.

Adrian Cowin, one of the forecasters, says ‘We enable people to make the best informed decisions, which can sometimes be critical’. He goes on to say that ‘I am looking forward to meeting members of the industry and community in the Daff tents at the summer agricultural shows. We even hope to have light winds and warm sunshine at the Royal Manx this year!’
Contact Tel: 821641 Fax: 01624 821646 or email: Adrian.Cowin@airport.dot.gov.im
2009 Agricultural Shows

By Audrey Fowler, Marketing Officer

The Agricultural shows have always been very important events in the Island’s social calendar. In recent times they have grown and evolved to cater for modern living. Thus involving a wider cross-section of the community. They afford a great opportunity for rural and urban dwellers to mingle and enjoy a great family day out, while at the same time appreciating all that is best in rural life on the Island.

We all know the dedication, care and attention to detail that both Agricultural Show Committees have in preparing their own shows. Both are deserving of the highest praise.

These shows provide a perfect opportunity to showcase Manx produce and educate the public about where their food is coming from and how it supports local farming communities. Visiting the Manx Food Court and Manx Food Live Theatre together with the Farmers’ Markets is a must this year.

Southern Agricultural Show, 25th and 26th July

After the great success of the 2008 Southern Agricultural Show, which attracted huge crowds of visitors, plans are now well underway for this year.

DAFF will be helping to promote Manx produce by sponsoring the Manx Food Court, together with a mini cooking area, coordinated by Relish Cookery School within the marquee. Guest speakers will be from: IOM Creamery, IOM Meats, Teare's Butchers, Island Seafare, Tanroagan Restaurant, Pentti Christian from Ellerslie Farm, Greeba Mushrooms and more. The I Love ManxChef competition will be looking for talented cooks to go forward in the Southern heat, (See page 9 for more details).

Royal Manx Agricultural Show (RMAS), 7th and 8th August

The muddy conditions of last year’s show will remain in everyone’s minds for many years to come, but let us hope that the sun will shine for this year’s show.

DAFF has pleasure in sponsoring the “timetable of events” leaflet, the Manx Food Court and the Manx Food Live Theatre. Guest speakers will be from: Bushys Brewery, IOM Creamery, IOM Meats, Island Seafare, Tanroagan Restaurant, Pentti Christian from Ellerslie Farm, Greeba Mushrooms and more. The I Love ManxChef competition will again be looking for talented cooks to go forward in the Northern heat.

Some of the Breed winners at last year’s Royal Manx Agricultural Show, (Left to right) Ray Kelly with his Wiltshire Horn Ram (they are a wool shedding breed that was used to produce the ‘easy care’ breed); John Quayle, Glenlough, with his Kerry Hill Ram, (the Kerry Hill Breed is from Powys, on the English/Welsh borders, and it derives its name from the village of Kerry, near Newtown), and finally William Quailtrough with a Charolais Ram, (the breed was first imported from France in the early 1970’s. The breed originated from around the town of Charolles in the Saone Loire region of France). All took part in the Grand parade.

The “Meet the Buyer” evening on the Friday evening is proving very successful bringing together growers, buyers and sellers, all networking to help Manx producers increase their sales.

Third Time Lucky for the Royal Manx?

By Christine Pain, Secretary to the Royal Manx Agricultural Show (RMAS)

Working on the old principle of “third time lucky”, we should be due for a bumper Royal Manx Agricultural Show this year. After the crushing disappointment of having to cancel the Show due to the outbreak of Food-&-Mouth Disease in southern England in 2007, and the challenging conditions brought on by the weather last year, the Society needs a really “good” show to get things back on track, before the planned move to Knockaloe.

The mudbath that the Show became last August was a totally new experience for a generation of children (and adults), who came prepared with their wellies and revelled ankle-deep in mud: others took a more cautious approach! Surveying the scene afterwards was a humbling experience, and no doubt people will talk about the “....mud at the 2008 Show” for many years to come.

However, rain or shine, the Royal Manx Agricultural Society has survived for a century and a half, celebrating our 150th anniversary by signing a lease with DAFF that will secure the future venue of the Royal Show at Knockaloane for the next twenty years. The establishment of a new Showground will require a massive financial investment by the Society, and represents a huge leap of faith by the Directors and Council of the Royal Manx; together with the prospect of a great deal of hard work! Mindful of the loss of a number of long established agricultural shows elsewhere in Britain, members of the Society realise that Shows have to attract a very diverse audience from town and country, so the balance between livestock, trade stands, marquee exhibits and entertainment is a fine one. There has to be something for everyone, so that all our visitors leave the Showfield tired but happy, with the feeling that they have had a wonderful day out.

It is envisaged that Knockaloane will also be the site for the new Central Marts facilities. The Directors are working closely with DAFF and the RMAS to move the project forward as quickly as possible. Everyone involved hopes that, by sharing vision and infrastructure, the future of Knockaloane as a countryside community resource will be assured.

Agri-News July 2009
Minister wants views on local food

Building on the success of last year’s Local Food research undertaken jointly by the Isle of Man Agricultural Marketing Society and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, further research is to be undertaken this summer to explore how consumer opinions and buying choices have evolved.

The work will test consumer’s reactions to a local food label that the Department is aiming to develop in partnership with the local food producers and retailers.

DAFF Minister, Phil Gawne MHK said: “I believe it is important that we understand consumer’s views and listen carefully to what they have to say. Working with the industry, I believe we can develop an iconic local food label that reassures our customers they are buying top quality fresh local food. Last year we got very strong feedback that we can improve the identity of local food, and we want to progress that idea.”

This will be accompanied by further work with local producers and retailers to explore their views on what is required from any local food label.

The Minister added “There are some great food brands on the Island already, and we want to work with the local retailers and producers to ensure our messages reflect the opinions we get from our customers through this survey. We will be approaching local producers and retailers to seek their views on what is required from any local food label over the next few months, and will then look at the results of this survey together”.

I Love ManxChef competition launched at Marks & Spencer

I Love Manx, the joint campaign that champions the providers of quality local produce and raises awareness of food and farming related issues, launched the I Love ManxChef competition at a specially organised event on the 19th June. Our grateful thanks go to Marks and Spencer, Douglas for being such splendid hosts.

The competition is aimed at all talented cooks who love cooking with Manx produce. We want to show just how versatile and delicious local food is. Entries of recipes, using predominantly Manx food, will be split into two categories (North vs. South). Four entrants from each region will then go through to regional heats to be held at the Southern Agricultural Show on Saturday 25th July, for Southern entrants, and the Royal Manx Agricultural Show on Saturday 8th August, for Northern entrants.

The finals will be judged by The Hairy Bikers at the Food and Drink Festival on Sunday 27th September at the Villa Marina.

To launch the competition DAFF Minister, Phil Gawne MHK and Ray Craine of the Manx National Farmers’ Union, Ray Craine tried their culinary skills with Manx cookery expert, Kathryn Sentence of Relish Cookery School.

The closing date for all entries to the I Love ManxChef competition is Friday 17th July.

Further details are available from the I Love Manx website or by contacting the Manx NFU office, telephone 662204.

The Department has launched a new award to be made to the Manx farmer who best meets the definition of someone who is farming to meet the needs of customers both now and in the future. The award will be called “Tomorrow’s Farmer” and it will be presented at the “Meet the Buyer” evening at the Royal Manx Agricultural Show on Friday 7th August 2009.

The award is being sponsored by Shoprite which has a keen commitment to supporting local producers as evidenced by its slogan “Manx to the Max”.

The judging panel will comprise of David Cannan MHK, Andrew Macdonald, SAC Agricultural Adviser, the President of the Manx NFU and the President of the Royal Manx Agricultural Show. The judges will be asked to put forward two nominees each. The judges will then select a winner based on the business that is “farming towards tomorrow”. Consideration will be given to: farming efficiently and profitably market focus, local food promotion, diversification and conservation.

Nominations for the Tomorrow’s Farmer Award is 31st July.

By Audrey Fowler, Marketing Officer

Minister Phil Gawne, MHK said: “This annual award will celebrate the work of farmers on the Island and we hope that the stories of the nominees and winner will help to spread best practice, inspire others and tell the public about the role that farmers play in Manx life. On a day-to-day basis, farming can be a tough job and farmers do not always get thanked for it. This award is a chance to celebrate all that is good about farming and give individuals the chance to shine. We are grateful to Shoprite for their support for this new initiative”.

I Love Manx, the joint campaign that champions the providers of quality local produce and raises awareness of food and farming related issues, launched the I Love ManxChef competition at Marks and Spencer in Douglas.
Chief Vet retires

DAFF Minister Phil Gawne MHK is pictured with retiring Chief Veterinary Officer Eamon O’Donnell, having presented Eamon with a picture, suitably amended, of the north of the Island and Ramsey Bay.

Eamon was first appointed as a Veterinary Officer on 2nd November 1992, under the watchful eye of Chief Vet Brian Cope. Prior to this he had been running his own veterinary practice in Anglesey. Eamon succeeded Brian as Chief Veterinary Officer on 15th June 1998, and worked closely with Chief Executives Tony Warren and (latterly) Colin Kniveton.

Eamon’s greatest challenge came during the outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in the UK in 2001. He, and his team in Animal Health Division, were stretched to the limit and beyond in their efforts to ensure that the Isle of Man was protected from Foot and Mouth Disease horrific consequences that would have occurred had this deadly disease spread to the Island’s livestock, probably crippling the agricultural industry in the process. It will be remembered that in 2001 there was no TT Festival, no Manx Grand Prix and no agricultural shows, to name but a few of the more significant cancellations.

The lessons learnt in 2001 were put to good use in 2007 when a further outbreak of the disease emanated from a UK Government research centre in the south of England. The prompt action of Eamon and his staff prevented the cancellation of many events in the latter half of the summer, although sadly the Royal Manx Agricultural Show was again a casualty; being due to take place as the news broke of Foot and Mouth in the UK.

Eamon is a keen sailor and left Ramsey a few weeks ago in his yacht, en route for a return to Anglesey where he and his wife Linda have been renovating their retirement cottage. Eamon’s experience and wise counsel will be greatly missed within DAFF, and all the staff wish Linda and Eamon a long, happy and healthy retirement together.

Reduced AI service charges for synchronised insemination of cattle

By Andrew Willoughby, Field Officer

The Department is offering reduced insemination fee for synchronised breeding programmes carried out in consultation with your veterinary practice.

While the Department is discouraging the importation of breeding stock to reduce the threat of blue tongue, the use of artificial insemination can be an important way to introduce new blood lines.

Synchronised insemination offers improved management of both beef and dairy herds, in that:

- less time is spent on heat detection,
- single bulls can be used creating uniformity and
- management tasks throughout the subsequent pregnancy can be grouped into single events saving both time and labour.

The reduced rate of £5.00 +VAT per insemination, per animal, is applicable only when 10 animals or more are inseminated on one visit by the AI man.

Synchronisation should be planned well in advance, with the insemination date and time arranged at mutually convenient times - avoiding weekend working.

Veterinary advice should be sought, and followed, before considering synchronisation.

Additionally, the Department has a full range of Beef bulls that are in the top of their respective breed averages, and a good selection of dairy sires (both sexed and normal semen) that are offered to producers at cost price.

Please call the AI answer phone on 845150, or Knockaloe office on 842335, to arrange a call giving at least 3 working days notice.

Isle of Man Meat Company satisfies demand for meat during TT week

The Isle of Man Meat company saw their biggest sales of meat on the Island for over 12 years during this year’s TT festival, with our visitors eating local shops out of all their meat. The Meatplant had to re-open to prepare extra steak and mince, as the great weather allowed BBQ to become the order of the day.

Mr Phil Teare, Managing Director of Isle of Man Meat Company said “By the middle of last week, our customers were ringing us to say they were likely to run out of meat, so we called the team back into the plant and worked extra shifts to meet our customers’ needs. We have seen local sales growing consistently over the last few years, so we knew the demand would be high and had worked with our customers to have plenty of meat available, however the amount eaten exceeded even our estimates.”

Minister Phil Gawne commented “This clearly demonstrates the advantage of having a sustainable, self reliant Isle of Man red meat sector. Isle of Man Meats was able to react quickly to ensure there was still meat on the shelves - we are lucky to have these local food providers which offer the flexibility to allow the Manx public to enjoy a high quality of food, without suffering every time the off-island suppliers misunderstand our Manx food needs.”
This summer, the Forestry Division will, once again, be stepping-up its programme of surveying to quickly deal with any occurrences of Dutch elm disease which threatens the Island’s 250,000 elm population.

The Forestry Division has employed 5 Dutch Elm Disease Surveyors – 3 in the north of the Island and 2 in the south for the 2009 summer season. The Surveyors will be visiting land and properties on a regular basis to check on the health of trees. Landowners who have elms on their property may therefore expect to receive several visits during the summer. Where possible, Surveyors will speak to owners prior to going onto land to explain what they are doing and they will have official identification.

Minister, Phil Gawne said “The Island has one of the most important stands of elm in Europe. However, we cannot be complacent as the potential for hotter summers increases the risk of spread of the disease and significant efforts to maintain our good record must be kept up. It is important to maintain regular checks of trees through the summer and landowners cooperation and assistance is greatly appreciated”

Dutch Elm Disease is a fungal disease which is mainly spread by the Elm Bark Beetle. If you see an elm tree that has unseasonal yellowing leaves or has lost its leaf coverage this summer, please contact the Forestry Division on 801263 to report the matter. If the disease is confirmed, trees will be felled and burned to contain the spread.

The Forestry Division has produced a leaflet “Tree Felling and the Law” in summary of the issues surrounding tree protection legislation. This is available from the Division’s Offices at St. Johns, telephone 801263.

**Live to Dead workshop**

By David Cain, Meat Grader

The live to dead workshops for cattle have continued throughout the Spring and early Summer, all of which have been fully subscribed and well received.

It is hoped to arrange further sessions for lambs in August and September. To secure a place on one of these workshops please contact Isle of Man Meats on 674346.
Market Trends  By Chris Kneale, Agricultural Adviser

Details of how the graphs have been calculated can be found at: www.gov.im/daff/News/agricultural.xml
The dashed lines show estimated prices for the weeks that accurate data is unavailable for.

Cattle prices for May are 40.5 p/kg ahead of the average May price during 2008, for a 300kg carcass that adds up to an increase of £121.5. Generally trade has remained stable as markets appear to have hit consumers spending limits and supermarkets not prepared to reduce their margins. Supply and demand in the UK market appears to be finely balanced, however recent news of increased local sales should encourage stable prices.

Lamb prices through April and May continued their upward trend with IoM prices on average 9.71 p/kg higher than UK lamb prices for the same period with a 18.5kg lamb carcass peaking at £79.4 with headage to follow. Following the seasonal trend, throughputs of new season lambs have increased significantly over the recent weeks, which as expected sees a reduction in lamb price.

Pig prices remain stable as UK prices also appear to be stabilising – perhaps as a result of reaching consumers spending limits. Prices for May are still ahead of May 08 by an average 26p/kg or £14.4 for a 50kg pork pig carcass.

Milk price for May is approximately 1p/l less than that received during May 08 with prices appearing to stabilise. Milk price in Northern Ireland also looks to have stabilised as surplus cheese is removed from the market. Stability or rather the cessation of a reducing milk price will provide producer’s confidence especially as concentrates and nitrogen fertiliser should be costing less than this time last year.