



Tails & Bales

News, Views and Information from Animal Antiks, Manor Farm, North Marston



Welcome to the first edition of Tails and Bales.



"What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

From 'Leisure' by William Henry Davis

The summer is a lovely time to get outdoors and really notice what's going on. Research proves that it can improve our mental health too. So when you next step outside why not take some time to savour what you can hear, smell and see.

Let's keep in touch:

Call us on
01296 670996

Email us on
info@animalantiks.co.uk

Visit our website at
www.animalantiks.co.uk



To keep up to date with the latest news, videos and photos of what's going on at Animal Antiks, check out our Facebook page

Summertime down on the farm.

As always at this time of year there is a lot happening down on the farm. All our animals are blissfully unaware of the lockdown and are carrying on in their usual way.

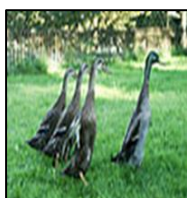
Animal Antiks is based on Manor Farm, a 230 acre farm in North Marston in the heart of the beautiful Buckinghamshire countryside. We are a mixed farm with grass crops and an array of interesting animals including; alpacas, donkeys, ponies, sheep, pigs, goats, chickens, ducks, rabbits, guinea pigs and of course, Digby, our majestic, if somewhat stubborn Clydesdale.

Most of the animals are making the most of this lovely warm dry weather and are out in their paddocks. The alpacas and sheep are grazing well having been shorn earlier in the summer. We have a number of alpaca fleeces to card and spin in the Autumn. We plan to try out our new peg loom too.

Our five pygmy goats have moved to their summer home in the old pig sty and are busy exploring their new area, complete with their own adventure playground.

All the hay has been cut and bailed. While waiting for the second cut of silage, Farmer Nick Sear has been busy catching up with the ditching and fencing jobs around the farm.

New Arrivals



Earlier this summer we bought some week old Indian Runner ducklings. They are keeping busy practising their

swimming and diving skills in a recycled paddling pool. There is no social distancing between those little fellas. Check out a lovely video of them on our facebook page. Currently there are some Cayuga duck eggs in the incubator. We are expecting them to hatch in a week or so.

In preparation for the launch of our Farm School this September we have taken on a herd of zwartbles sheep. This unusual breed originates from the Netherlands. They are very distinctive with their brown fleeces and white blazes on their faces.



Fun and Learning

Several enthusiastic youngsters come to work and learn on the farm each week. Naturally, with the current restrictions in place, their usual activities have had to be adapted but there are still plenty of opportunities for fun and learning. One talented young man has been busy preparing bird box kits to be distributed as part of our new Countryside Men Outreach project.



Down on the Veg Plot

Our vegetable plot is looking good too with our carrots, courgettes and broad beans all doing well. There will be lots to harvest in the coming weeks.

Bringing our farm to your door.....albeit at a distance

Our exciting Outreach Project is for you if

- You are a man who enjoys the countryside and outdoors or a carer of someone who does
- You are feeling the effects of lockdown and would appreciate some support
- You would like some activities to help pass the time

The team at Animal Antiks are taking some positive steps to support men and their family carers while lockdown is forcing their isolation at home and affecting their physical and mental wellbeing.

Thanks to some funding from the national charity, Countrymen UK, we are launching an outreach project to connect with these men and their family carers. The men and carers can choose how much or how little support they require.



So, if you or someone you know would like to receive;

FREE countryside-based activities to do at home (these could be around woodwork, gardening or craft)

FREE farm fresh eggs, when available

FREE books from our library

FREE friendly telephone support

FREE informative newsletters

Please do get in touch with Emma Dearn using the contact details at the bottom of Page 1.

Thatching: Tools & Traditions

Whilst enjoying my daily walk, I spotted Chris Smart thatching a cottage in Grendon Underwood so I stopped to find out more about this traditional country craft.



Thatching dates back to the Bronze Age and is the skilled craft of constructing a roof with dry vegetation. This could be straw, water reed, sedge, rushes or heather. The thick layer of thatching material sheds water away from the inner roof and, due to its density, makes an efficient insulator too.

Chris described how he was using wheat straw, which was grown in Devon. This crop is harvested using a special machine called a binder so that the long stems are kept. He estimated



that the roof would take between 4 and 5 tons of wheat straw costing around £1000 per ton. Depending on the climate and the pitch of a roof, a thatched roof could last up to 30 years.

Chris begins by tying the straw into bundles and laying them as an underlayer on the roof beams. These are pegged in place with hazel rods called spars. An upper layer is laid over the first with a final reinforcing layer added along the ridgeline. Chris uses a Leggett, a specialist tool shaped



like a spade to shape the thatch before trimming. It is traditional for a thatcher to leave their personal decorative "signature", often the shape of an animal on the ridgeline. The folklore surrounding this suggests it is to ward off witches!

Let's get together down on the farm this Autumn

We are very pleased to announce that from September 2020 we shall be starting our very own Countrymen Club here at the farm. We shall meet every Wednesday afternoon.



Come rain or shine we will come together to enjoy the countryside, care for our animals, get active on the farm and in the garden. There will be plenty of time to chat over a cuppa and share our interests with each other.



If you or someone you know could benefit from connecting with others who love the outdoors and would be interested in joining this group please get in touch. We will be happy to discuss it more and arrange a taster session.



We hope you have enjoyed reading our newsletter. If you would like to receive future copies please join our mailing list by sending an email to the address on Page 1