

Bedfordia Farms Spring 2021 update

It has been an exceptionally challenging winter with extremely high levels of rain limiting access to the land, and like most other local farmers we had only drilled a third of our winter crops by end of year 2020.

However, winter is a good time to catch up on all the jobs we haven't had time to do earlier in the year and the team have been busy with essential estate maintenance such as hedge cutting, clearing ditches and woodland works.

We also carry out a tree safety survey (every three years), to highlight trees that may pose a threat to the public. Heritage Arboricultural have been helping us expertly prune back the larger trees overhanging footpaths, bridleways and roads. You may have seen some of the tree work while walking your dogs or driving by the Odell bends, and the pollarding of the willow trees on the approach to Radwell. As well as cutting back, we have also been filling in gaps hedges and have planted nearly 3,000 hedging plants and new trees during the last few months.



Thank you for your patience during the exceptionally muddy winter months, we appreciate that this makes the footpaths and bridleways difficult to traverse but they are drying out now and as the vegetation returns and the spring flowers appear, it's amazing how quickly they revitalize.

As we go into the spring, you will see increased activity around the farm as the established crops are assessed and encouraged to promote healthy and high yielding growth. As well as slurry and manure, we also use a great locally produced resource called Biofertiliser (Digestate) on our crops. Digestate is a by-product from anaerobic digestion, the process where organic matter such as animal or food waste is broken down to generate renewable energy. The nutrient rich Digestate while a little smelly, is pasteurised to kill any germs. It's applied twice a year in place of fossil fuel derived fertilisers - in the autumn to oil seed rape and in the spring to cereal crops. Over the last 15 years Bedfordia have reduced the amount of fossil fuel fertilizers used on their land by 50%.

We always aim to spread with the public in mind, checking the weather, wind direction and ground conditions prior to the spread and we employ a specialist team of contractors to do the spreading according to legislative and good-practice guidelines. You might notice increased traffic through your village during these periods.

We are currently also busy renewing and maintaining our 85 wildflower and winter bird seed sites scattered around our fields, that offer food and shelter to birds and insects. The seed mix we sow includes a variety of wild-flowers, cereals and brassicas. These include Phacelia, Clover, Oxeye Daisies, Red Campion, Mustard, Millet, Spring Barley, Rye, Turnips and Radishes. During the 20 years we have been managing these sites, we have seen a positive impact on the variety and quantity of wildlife around the farm. Look out for the pretty Red Campion meadow along one of the permitted footpaths in Sharnbrook and let us know what else you spot along the footpaths that might be of interest.



(Image of the Brown Hare courtesy of Duncan Woodhead).

Bedfordia Farms are passionate about farming and the stewardship of the countryside that surrounds your villages. It's been great to see the increased number of people out and about on the footpaths during COVID and we have had some really positive exchanges both formally and in passing. And it's because of this that we wanted to provide you with updates on our farming activities through your Parish Council. We hope you have found it interesting and please feel free to contact us with any questions you have at info@bedfordia.co.uk