

# Friends of FAI



NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2009

Food Animal Initiative The Field Station Wytham Oxford OX2 8QJ



## FLOOD MEADOWS BECOME PART OF FAI

FAI has just taken on the rent of a further 200 acres of ancient flood meadows. Wolvercote Meadows, Pixie Mead and Yarnton Meadow stretch from the Trout Inn at Godstow, northwards and westwards along the eastern bank of the Thames towards Cassington and the A40. These meadows are internationally recognized SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest).

The meadows will be cut for hay in late July and then grazed by cattle and sheep through to the autumn. This grazing by stock is an intrinsic part of the management plan and should help to preserve the diversity of the vegetation.

“We are really pleased to be able to add this block of land to our farming operations”, said Mike Gooding, Managing Director of FAI. “It’s an exciting project for the farm working with such famous areas of north Oxfordshire and a real opportunity to see how livestock enterprises work together with such highly valued environmental areas.”

### **OPEN MORNINGS FOR CHILDREN**

**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> July, 7<sup>th</sup> August & 21<sup>st</sup> August**

**Learn about the animals – creative activities – games and competitions –  
most suitable for primary school age children  
Admission free**

## PIGS WITH TAILS GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Many farmers believe that cutting the tails of growing pigs is essential to stop the pigs from biting each other's tails. At FAI, however, all the pigs keep their tails and there is no tail biting. The key to this success is to provide straw and woodchip so that the pigs have plenty to do and to keep them in 'peer groups' so that they have a stable social life.



A grant from the RSPCA has now enabled FAI to document the details and economics of their system with the aim of persuading other farmers to adopt it too. The latest batch of 5 sows have come up trumps. Between them, they produced an average of 10 piglets each with no piglet deaths at all. FAI are now collaborating with Bishop Burton Agricultural College in N. Yorks to keep a much larger number of sows than is possible at Wytham. This 'rollout' will give an even greater chance of influencing the way pigs are kept throughout the UK and beyond.

### FAI AND INDUSTRY

Together with the University of Oxford, FAI have just been awarded a grant of £32,000 from the BBSRC (the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council) to develop MSc level courses for people working in the food industry (retailers, caterers, producers and other areas). Module 1 is 'Animal Welfare in Commercial Livestock Production' Module 2 is 'Conducting Effective R&D in Commercial Agriculture'. The courses are due to run for the first time in 2010. More details can be found on the FAI website at <http://www.faifarms.co.uk> and clicking on 'Education'.

Two very successful workshops held at FAI have brought together representatives from Defra, the farming and food industry and scientists to discuss the most up to date research findings on key issues. On 25th June, a workshop on *Campylobacter in Poultry* showed how genotyping of bacteria is now helping to trace the sources of this serious cause of food poisoning and point the way to how it might be eliminated.

Then, on 8<sup>th</sup> July a second workshop tackled one of the most worrying welfare problems facing egg producers - namely, the problem of feather pecking in laying hens, which is most serious in non-cage systems. With the EU ban on battery cages coming into force in 2012, producers need to understand how to prevent feather-pecking and really improve bird welfare.

### BOOST FROM OAST FOR FAI EDUCATION

A generous gift from the Oxfordshire Agricultural Society Trust will enable the Education Initiative to buy an incubator for children to watch eggs developing and hatching plus a computer and webcam. This builds on a grant from the Ernest Cook Trust funded through the Farm Animal Welfare Trust (FAWT) that has provided seed corn money for the Education initiative

*Nearly 1000 people attended FAI's Open Farm Sunday on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Some of their comments can be seen on the website (<http://www.faifarms.co.uk>)*