

Friends of FAI



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2009

Food Animal Initiative The Field Station Wytham Oxford OX2 8PW

A fun day out for all the family

LEAF OPEN FARM SUNDAY – 7th JUNE

**Trailer tours – guided walks – lambs and day-old chicks –
thatching demonstration – local produce – bouncy castle
Admission free**

THE OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

The Outdoor Classroom is a new initiative aimed at developing the Farm as a learning resource for a wide range of activities and ideas from animal behaviour and animal welfare to human health and the environment. Funded by the Farm Animal Welfare Trust with a grant from the Ernest Cook Trust, we are starting to develop the enormous potential of the Farm for making people of all ages aware of the issues surrounding the production of their food and what farming the land is all about.



Our aim is to provide schools and other groups an opportunity to visit the Farm (for free!), to experience a real live farm and to be involved in FAI's ethical approach to farming.

We are therefore issuing an invitation to schools and other groups to visit the Farm at any time but particularly during the period 8th-14th, following the Farm Open day on 7th June. We are planning a whole week of school visits, family days, presentations, exhibitions and talks.

If you are a teacher and would consider bringing a school party, you can download our Teachers' Pack from <http://www.faifarms.co.uk/content/26/the-outdoor-classroom>. This gives information about health and safety and what you can expect on a farm visit. If you have questions or would like to book a visit, email rosalind.mackay@faifarming.plus.com or telephone 01865-790880.

ENVIRONMENTAL SCHEMES GOOD FOR BIODIVERSITY

Ever since 1993, before FAI even arrived, the biodiversity of the farm has been monitored by the Natural Environment Research Council as part of their network of key climate change sites known as the Environmental Change Network. When FAI took over the tenancy of the farm in 2001, much of the previously ploughed land became grassland for sheep and cattle and the farm gradually moved over to organic production. The effects of these changes in farming practice on the wildlife were documented by the Environmental Change Network, giving a unique picture of what happens when a farm 'goes organic'. Most studies on the effects of environmental schemes so far have been short-term comparisons of different farms, some of which are farmed with such schemes and some without, but here is the long-term history of one farm and the changes that have taken place in its natural flora and fauna as artificial fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides were removed.

Since 2002, there has been a clear increase in plant biodiversity (species richness), including more species that are food plants for butterfly caterpillars. There are more species of moths and the Brown Argues butterfly has been recorded for the first time since the monitoring began. You can read more details of Michele Taylor and Mike Morecroft's results in *Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment* (<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/agee>).

FAI IN CHINA



The Model Farm Project is a partnership between the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) and the Food Animal Initiative (FAI).

The aim is to establish an international network of viable, humane and sustainable model farms. that can demonstrate that humane and sustainable farming is not just a 'philosophy' but rather a practical reality that is already working on the ground (www.modelfarmproject.org).

In March 2009, Ruth Layton (seen left with Wen Peng) and Ashleigh Bright visited the FAI Model Farm Project Team in China.

Over 70% of farms in China are less than a hectare in size and have just one or two cattle/pigs and a few sheep or chickens. In general, the welfare of the animals on these farms is excellent; they receive plenty of individual attention, space and a variety of enrichments. However, the Chinese government is now increasingly focused on food security and is subsidising the building of large scale intensive animal production, which will dramatically change the form of agriculture in rural China and, with it, the welfare of animals. The Model Farm Project aims to show the economic and welfare benefits of organic food production and humane farming practices.



The MFP provides the farmers with technical advice, training and audits the farms each year to ensure they are meeting MFP animal welfare and production standards. But the benefits are two way. FAI have much to learn about efficient use of land, closed-loop farming practices, and waste reduction. Ruth was particularly interested in the traditional poultry breeds because they are extremely hardy and cope well with cold weather. There may be potential to cross some of these traditional breeds with the broiler strains being developed at FAI through the Broiler Breeding Project .

- THE FRIENDS OF FAI FUND is raising money for:
 - An education officer for the Outdoor Classroom
 - A trailer for farm tours behind the tractor
 - A clear-topped incubator to watch chicks hatching.
- Can you help with money or your time for school visits?
Contact marian.dawkins@zoo.ox.ac.uk