

## ELY AND DISTRICT TRAINING GROUP

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NEWSLETTER JUNE 2011

At the recent Training Group AGM it was agreed that subscriptions should be maintained for another year at the current rate. Please find enclosed your subscription invoice. If you pay by BACS it would be very helpful if you could email or post a remittance advice to me at the time of payment to help match things up at this end.

Most members have utilised the funding available from LandSkills East for training courses. In a previous email it was stated this would come to an end in January. I am pleased to say that this deadline has now been extended to the end of March. However, **all applications for funds must be in to the funding body by the end of August**. If you would like me to come and see you to discuss your training requirements for the winter please let me know and we can arrange a time to meet. You will find enclosed a list of courses currently available. This is not definitive and it would be helpful if you had any ideas on other areas of training you would like cover.

Collecting BASIS points can prove problematic but if you attend the annual NRoSO update and a couple of the other management courses then you will be well on your way. If you have been contemplating doing arable BASIS this is the winter to do it as it attracts 75% funding and will cost under £1000.

We ran a very successful workshop last winter on water and energy efficiency when irrigating and would like to repeat it if enough people are interested. Dr Jerry Knox opens the day with a group exercise identifying the irrigation challenge on farm and then moves on to examine the pathway to efficiency. Smaller groups then rotate round the room doing different exercises: Jerry leads understanding soil and climate variability on irrigation; Simon Turner looks at improving crop yield and quality - the benefits and challenges of scheduling; while Melvyn Kay covers optimising equipment - understanding pipes and pumps. The afternoon session looks at understanding adequacy, efficiency and uniformity and the day ends with a group exercise using worked examples for calculating performance indicators for overhead and micro (drip) irrigation.

Dr Mark Stalham will run a day for us on Irrigation for Potatoes. Potatoes consume 56% of the total water applied as irrigation to UK crops. With predictions of climate change and environmental legislation, increasing demand and restricting irrigation availability in future, even small improvements in efficiency would enable growers to maintain yields and save large quantities of water. Irrigation efficiency is generally much lower than the efficiency of

water use by the plant, therefore large improvements can be made. A major reason for poor utilization of water is that water is applied when it is not needed and little attention is paid to environmental or plant measurements that determine the water balance and quality requirements of a specific crop. Topics covered on the training course will include assessing irrigation requirements, soil type selection, common scab and other quality issues related to irrigation and water application methods.

Another course we could repeat given enough interest is Nutrient Management. This is available to all those holding a FACTS qualification; to retain this you will need to complete the nutrient management training course by December 2014. Everyone taking the course must follow it up by doing an on-line assessment; there is also an optional exam which counts towards the BASIS diploma. Andrew Watson would run this as a 2.5 day course. Also on offer is a 1 day NVZ update course for farmers which covers the essential requirements and obligations on farmers of the NVZ regulations including updated rule amendments. We are looking into a weed identification course for managers and will run the annual agronomy update with John Purslow. Please let me know if you would like to book places on any of the above so I can get dates in the diary with the relevant instructors.

Funding is available for almost all staff training unless it is a legislative requirement. Some of these courses are expensive so if you want to be qualified to do your own PAT testing or gain basic electrical skills so you can change plugs and re-set trip switches without an electrician then this winter is the time to do it. Do check the forklift certificates of everyone who uses these machines, even if it is only occasionally, as refresher training can be funded. While this is not a legal requirement, in the event of an accident you may have to justify to your insurer and if it came to it would have to justify to a court why you chose to go against the approved code of practise which recommends refresher training every 5 years. Anyone who gained their driving license after 1 January 1997, i.e. under the age of 31, will need to add B&E to their license if they tow anything behind a car or 4X4. This training is expensive, so do get it done while it can be funded. The test is not fundable as it is a legal requirement.

Practical cross compliance is a half day course that helps you to ensure that your farm is totally cross compliant and should not fall foul of the cross-compliance inspectors who are expected to be making more spot checks on farm in the future. Attending this session would help you to avoid deductions from your single farm payment.

Do please get in touch if you want to arrange a meeting or book any training.



