



Welcome to your Farm Cluster Newsletter

Here's what we've been up to in the last month - if you have any questions about the stories in this newsletter or suggestions for future articles, please contact: [Ross Wingfield](#) or [Christine Meadows](#).

Groundswell Agriculture No-Till Show & Conference, June 2019

Farm Cluster and High Weald AONB team members headed to Lannock Manor Farm, Hertfordshire, for a packed couple of days at the annual conference about regenerative agriculture - by farmers, for farmers.

No-till, cover crops, silvopasture and re-introducing livestock into the arable rotation to improve soil health were just some of the subjects among the thought-provoking talks on offer.



There were plenty of practical demos too, ranging from the host farmer's mob-grazing herd, to the latest direct-drilling machines and new advances in electric fencing for controlling livestock.

Soil health theme

The fundamental importance of healthy soils was embedded in every talk and presentation. It was clear that the future of good farming practice is to build healthy, rich, structured soils, essential for healthy plant growth, good food for human nutrition, biodiversity, and the environment.

We're convinced that the progressive and innovative methods of regenerative agriculture have a vital role to play in this.

Edwina Moore, Farm Cluster member was interested to hear how "Nitrate applications suppress a plant's production of root exudates, effectively cutting off its [own] biological nitrogen supply."
See Soil Health Specialist, Jay Fuhrer's talk on [YouTube](#).

Jason Lavender, High Weald AONB Co-director, said "Yet again the variety and quality of the talks was breathtaking. The event reinforced our belief that properly-managed livestock are good for our nutritional health and play an essential role in maintaining grassland ecosystems. A 'designed by nature' grazing system restores worn-out soils and builds up amazing soil fertility."

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Working with the natural environment for profitable farming

We heard from Allan Savory, author of 'Holistic Management; a common sense revolution to restore our environment'. It took him over 50 years to discover how farming systems work with the surrounding ecosystem, influencing water, carbon or nutrient cycles. He explained that by working with your area's ecology, you can have an effective and profitable farming system.

We'd recommend visiting Groundswell

It's a great place to meet and learn from like-minded people. If you want to establish a herbal ley, set up infrastructure for holistic planned grazing, test your soil health or move to a minimum-till system, someone at Groundswell can show you how.

Find out more:

Check out Groundswell on [YouTube](#) for short interviews with the show's speakers. See you there next year, **24 to 25 June 2020**: groundswellag.com

Ross Wingfield, Land Management Advisor, High Weald AONB team

Upcoming free or subsidised Farm Cluster events:

- **26 September: Deer management season launch**, Beech Estate near Battle. Afternoon session about getting off to a good start managing deer on your land and with your neighbours. Find out about assessing the impact of deer and getting the best out of stalking contracts. Booking details to come.
- **25 October, 12-7pm: High Weald Farming Futures conference, 'Building Soils, Resilience and Profit'**, Crowborough. An unmissable opportunity to join national farming pioneers for an engaging discussion on using regenerative agriculture practices to improve soils, farm resilience and profits. To register your interest and get priority booking details, email [Ross](#).

Member news

Welcome to new members Chris of Storrers Farm and Richard and Michelle of Upper Old Mill Farm.

Other news

Prince's Farm Resilience Programme: Following our approach to the Princes Countryside Fund, we're delighted that this national programme will be offering free business skills workshops to the area's family farms. We have 10 dairy or livestock farmers enrolled and are looking for another 10 more to participate, so please spread the word. See our [website](#) for details.

Oak Processionary Moth (OPM): Have you bought any imported oak trees greater than 8cm girth at 1.2m above the root collar? Be aware they may harbour non-native pest caterpillars which shed hairs potentially causing skin irritation and breathing difficulties in humans and livestock. They can also strip whole oak trees bare.



Please check any large imported oaks and report any findings through TreeAlert. If you can, quarantine any new oaks through one early summer season to check for emerging caterpillars. Do not attempt to destroy or move infected material yourself. For more on OPM and identifying it, see: www.forestresearch.gov.uk

About:

The Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster helps farmers, foresters and other land managers work together to improve farm profitability and benefit soil, water, wildlife and historic features not just on their individual farms, but across the area. It has 58 members covering over 3,500ha. The Cluster is helped by the High Weald AONB Partnership with financial support from Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund, the Environment Agency (Giant Hogweed control), and the Woodland Trust (deer management). Visit the Upper Rother & Dudwell Farm Cluster page at www.highweald.org