

## Raising funds for charity with flowers

OLLY Harrison, 35, has found a way of feeding birds and bees while also raising money for a cancer charity.

The farmer planted a five-acre field with 75,000 sunflowers after rabbits ate all the winter wheat originally growing there.

Olly, of Water Lane Farm in Tarbock Merseyside, is chairman of the NFU North West regional combinable crops board.

He hopes to raise £1 for each plant for Sunflowers, an independent charity that supports cancer patients, survivors and carers in Merseyside.

He said: "Originally, I wanted to see if the flower would grow well in my region."

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GOOD CAUSE: Olly Harrison aims to raise money for a cancer charity by growing sunflowers

# Sheep dip appeal

By Neil Ryder

AN appeal has gone out to farmers who were tested for organophosphate-related poisoning at Guys Hospital in 1991, 1992, and 1993 to get in touch with the Sheep Dip Sufferers Support Group.

This follows three sets of results, which have just been released to the group.

Group co-ordinator, Tom Rigby said: "We have been pressing for release of these test results for some time but were initially told by Defra that they could not be found."

"While the testing was paid for by

the ministry, MAFF, in conjunction with VMD – the Veterinary Medicines Directorate – their policy was not to send farmers their results, though their GPs were informed, if known.

"Individual test results are listed in the reports we have, but those tested are only identified by a number, age, sex, occupation and the period in which tests were made.

"We would like, where possible, to pass on to farmers their individual results. The reports are published on the group's website. We realise that some of the farmers involved may have died since the tests were made, in which case it may be a case of contacting their families."

"The last interim report shows OP poisoning was confirmed in every case where data was complete and for the first time it reports chronic symptoms lasting for ten years or more.

"By then, I think MAFF/VMD had learned all they needed to know and the testing was discontinued.

"Some confirmed cases were invited back for further tests at Guys conducted by a US chemical weapons expert from Fort Detrick, David H Moore. We suspect those additional tests were just for his research rather than having any therapeutic value and I doubt that those will ever be released."

The papers list information on 45 cases of suspected sheep dip and re-

lated illness between September 1 and December 31, 1992, and a summary of 32 enquiries followed up and a further 20 without analytical data from 1982 to 1991.

The records include chemicals used, exposure details, clinical effects, blood test information and comments. They range from light exposure, possibly over periods of time, to situations where farmers have entered dips to rescue sheep. They also note a small number of cases where non-farmers helping farmers with sheep dipping have reported illness afterwards.

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## AGRICULTURAL TRADE OPEN DAY

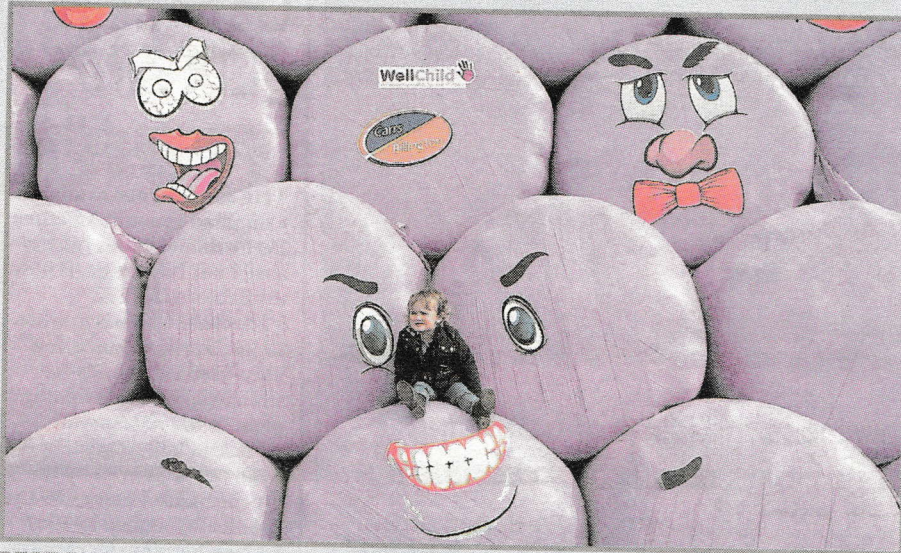
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**BEST PICTURE:** Grace Baty sitting on her purple monster bales was voted the best

which were displayed on the WellChild and Carrs Billington Facebook pages. Mr and Mrs Baty will attend the WellChild Awards 2016 at the Dorchester Hotel, London, on October 3. The awards will be attended by WellChild Patron Prince

Harry and a host of celebrities and will present awards to inspirational children coping with serious illness, to caring children and to dedicated child health professionals.

The winning picture from the Baty family had two-year-old Grace sitting on

the display posing with the monsters and attracted the greatest number of likes on Facebook.

Carrs Billington chose to support WellChild and distributed the purple silage wrap and netwrap supplied by Zeus Packaging Group in WellChild purple.

Birds feed  
on crop  
over winter

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"After standing in the field watching bees feeding on flowers, I thought it would be a shame to harvest them and would be nice to leave them for the birds to feed on over winter.

"It was at this point that I came up with the idea of raising money from them for charity."

By visiting Olly's JustGiving page, people can pledge money to the charity and show support for British farmers who have embraced the conservation agenda.

Olly adds: "I will lose money on the field by not harvesting the flowers but that's farming at present. I am already losing on the rest of my crops this year, so giving something to a good cause will cheer me up and if it's successful I will grow some more next year."

Olly, who is the NFU North West's youngest board chairman farms 1,200 acres.

To pledge support, visit [justgiving.com/fundraising/Oliver-Harrison7](http://justgiving.com/fundraising/Oliver-Harrison7).

Research  
needed

■ Continued from p 1

The 1992 report noted: "The results of this first phase have demonstrated a medical problem from occupational exposure to sheep dip. It has also gathered evidence from media reports and case histories, that not all cases are notified to relevant agencies."

It also cites the problems of diagnosis saying that the clinical effects resulting from exposure to organophosphate sheep dip are non-specific and that confirmation is best shown by blood tests taken as soon as possible after exposure.

The report calls for promoting greater awareness of the problem among GPs and the need for further research work on sheep dip-related illness.

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to projects, including Upper Teesdale Agricultural Support Service to help provide a raft of digital support and advice to farmers; North East Enterprise Agency, helping to support rural enterprise hubs across rural areas of the northern uplands to create successful centres for business support and networking; Bell View, which has helped to buy a new specialist wheelchair accessible vehicle that will support 45 older people in a largely rural area where little or no public transport exists and delivered 1,200 trips.

As part of its vital role in responding to countryside crises, the fund is also opening up specific funds to help support the winter flood recovery. Organisations that are supporting

farmers, rural businesses and communities following the severe storms in December 2015 across Cumbria, Lancashire, Northumberland and North Yorkshire and Scotland.

Submissions close on October 13. Applicants can visit [princescountrysidefund/grant-programme](http://princescountrysidefund/grant-programme) to find out how to apply. Since being founded by HRH The Prince of Wales in 2010, the fund has distributed more than £7m to 182 projects across the UK, helping more than 200,000 people.

Clare Crookenden, grants manager for The Prince's Countryside Fund, said: "Since 2010, our grant programme has provided a vital boost to people and grassroots organisations which are working hard to protect and enhance

the countryside. We've been able to support innovative and diverse projects, ranging from inspiring young people to develop their skills and pursue a rural career to strengthening rural businesses who have been hit hard in recent years.

"Our grant programme has been made to available to help improve the lives of people living and working in the countryside. Community shops, libraries and pubs and the people that support them add vibrancy and strength to rural communities and we are committed to help. Action is needed to give rural communities the chance to provide the vital services that they rely on and to ensure all of us benefit from retaining a vibrant countryside."

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## COMMENT

# THE NORTHERN Farmer

## Test results are finally published

**T**HE tireless work of the Sheep Dip Sufferers Support Group has resulted in the release of yet more damning evidence about the effects of organophosphate-based dips on the health of those using them.

As detailed on the front page, three sets of results from farmers and farm workers who were tested for suspected OP poisoning in the early 1990s have finally been published.

The documents demonstrate the various acute symptoms that have been attributed to exposure to OP dips before concluding whether or not the chemicals could be given as a confirmed, likely, possible or unlikely cause.

Taking the 1992 test results as a snapshot, the ill health suffered by 12 patients was judged to "likely" have been caused by exposure to sheep dip.

These patients include two brothers aged 33 and 35 at the time, a 54-year-old farmer, who had dipped sheep five days a month for 40 years, and a 51-year-old who reported falling ill while dipping. The age range of those tested shows this is by no means an issue for a previous generation. The youngest patient deemed likely to have been made ill by the dip would be only 50 now.

It is to be hoped that the appeal by the Sheep Dip Sufferers Support Group to find the farmers who participated in the testing is a success, not least so they can be finally given their results.

It could also prove more than useful to see how their health has fared in the two and a half decades since the tests, given the increasing clamour for a full inquiry into allegations that farmers were misled about the dangers of OP dips.

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## Looking on the bright side as nights draw

**W**ITH warm summer days giving way to chilly mornings, and the nights drawing in at an alarming rate, I've decided to try and forget the impending onset of winter by immersing myself in good news.

Once I got past the ruination of The Great British Bake Off and the split of Brad and Angelina, the positive stories just kept on coming.

First up: milk prices.

Clearly prices are still way off being at sustainable levels, and the recent mini-recovery has been far too slow to filter down to producers.

But the overall trend at the moment is upwards, so that counts as good news in my book – especially given the gloomy predictions over the state of the market earlier this year.

In the last few days, First Milk has announced a 2p per litre increase – its biggest monthly rise since 2007 – and is to pay bonuses early.

Arla is putting up its price by 1.6p per litre in October, its second monthly increase running, while Dairy Crest has already confirmed a 1.5p per litre rise, phased over two months.

Hopefully, as the market stabilises and confidence returns – and with demand predicted to outstrip supply for the rest of the year – processors will keep the rises coming until farmgate prices come up to cover the cost of production, at the absolute minimum.

While I'm on the subject of the white stuff, it seems like the eminently sensible idea of shops selling small containers



### UPWARD TRENDS

**Hannah Chapman** considers there is plenty to be optimistic about with the introduction of several new positive initiatives

of milk alongside convenience food is paying off.

Instead of glugging fizzy pop, retailers are catching on to the fact that people wanting a drink on the go might choose a healthier, more nutritious alternative.

And it looks like thirsty shoppers are going for it, with Arla's Cravendale 250ml bottles now being sold in the soft drinks cabinets of four retailers. Arla is said to be in negotiations with other stores about rolling it out even further.

Sometimes the simplest ideas really are the best ones.

Which leads me to British Food Fortnight.

Another straightforward but brilliant concept. Pick a two-week period, align yourself with harvest festival – one of the oldest and most universal of countryside traditions – and use it to promote all that is good about British produce

to schools, caterers, restaurants and the public.

This year's BFF ran from September 17 to October 1 and its headline announcement was that The Co-op will buy all of its fresh bacon lamb from British farmers on May 1 next year.

Under a three-year plan, The Co-op will invest a £1.5bn sourcing meat and vegetables from the UK.

The new initiative will make The Co-op the only major food retailer to stock 100 per cent own-brand British chicken, pork, lamb, bacon and turkey.

Here's hoping others follow The Co-op's lead. Are you listening Tesco and your other favourite farm brands from there and everywhere?

The Co-op is the main sponsor of Love British Food, an organisation behind BFF which was created in 2006 to promote British produce

“While I'm on the subject of the white stuff, it seems like the eminently sensible idea of shops selling small containers of milk alongside convenience food is paying off. Instead of glugging fizzy pop, retailers are catching on to the fact that people wanting a drink on the go might choose a healthier, more nutritious alternative”

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