

Summary of some of the main curriculum themes related to farming

For each month the main activities on a farm are listed and then school activities related to these with examples for pupils across the year groups. Each month a theme is taken in addition to the day to day practical work, and some festivals are listed that will be worked in to give an appreciation of British Values, the farming year and other cultures. Probable contacts for theme activities are listed with each month.

The school will have;

Horticulture/agriculture:

Orchard fruits

Soft Fruits

Cereals

Vegetables

Flowers

Animal husbandry:

Chickens

Ducks

Goats

Lambs

Looking after the plants and animals will be woven into the school day and used as the inspiration for all subject areas; here are a few brief examples from some subject areas:

English; descriptive, creative and for purpose writing

Mathematics; recording and analysing, practical business applications

Science; experimentation with horticulture and agriculture, recording, presenting information

PSHE and related areas; caring for and looking after animals and crops and the opportunities this gives to learn about development health, being part of a community

History; the way people lived in our area and beyond, different ways in which growing crops and looking after animals have changed over time

Geography: the sorts of agriculture and farming that are usual locally, across the UK and across the world

September

What a farm does:

- Harvesting of top fruit (apples, pears and plums) reaches its peak
- Harvesting of late varieties of soft fruit (raspberries and blackberries)
- Maize harvested to make into silage for winter feeding to cattle
- Topping starts - Ewes are mated with rams for spring lambing
- Autumn calving of dairy cows
- Spreading of farmyard manure onto farmland before autumn cultivations
- Autumn cultivations (ploughing, seedbed preparations, liming etc) and the sowing of arable crops (winter barley, oats and wheat) in full swing
- Local and county ploughing matches take place

Practical activity; Juice from fruit; contact Wobblegate Farm Bolney

Festival ; Autumn Equinox;

Some school activities:

Work to do with harvesting, both of the school crops and looking at what large farms do locally.

Practical work around juice. Juicing by hand, using a juicer. What can be created? Why extract juice from fruit. Visit a juice producer. Health and nutrition.

Ploughing; look at older and new methods; horse power and tractors. Visit and watch ploughing. Possible visit from Harveys Shire Horses to plough a small section of the school field.

Need for winter feed; why? Growing seasons. Fertiliser. Growth of seeds. Plant small scale items like cress to see seeds grow indoors.

October

What a farm does:

- Grape picking and wine making commences. There are several vineyards producing quality award-winning wine in the Chilterns region
- Autumn cultivations (ploughing, seedbed preparations, liming etc) and the sowing of arable crops (winter barley, oats and wheat) continue
- Summer grazed dairy and beef cows are housed for the winter and fed preserved crops (grass and maize silage) and supplementary concentrated feed
- Ewes are mated with rams for spring lambing
- Autumn calving of dairy cows

Practical activity; Flour milling; contact Batemans working mill
Baking contact Flint owl Bakery

Festival; Harvest festival, Folk dancing festival in Lewes

Some school activities

Work to do with harvesting, both of the school crops and looking at what large farms do locally.

Work on milling; why is it needed? Historical aspects. Relation to need for power, how is power generated. Wind and water power. Grinding by hand. Visit to a mill. Calculations about the amount of flour produced from grain, and bread from flour. Value added; business aspects. Industrial and artisan baking. Cook bread using yeast. The story of a grain of wheat from planting to harvesting to milling to baking to eating.

Harvest festival; reasons for this in the farm calendar. The modern harvest festival with tins and packets and its relationship to the original one. A time for giving; helping others in the community.

November

What a farm does:

- Autumn cultivations to prepare the ground for planting crops near completion
- Harvesting of winter vegetables (cauliflowers, beetroot, swede, parsnips and leeks)
- Summer grazed dairy and beef cows are housed for the winter and fed preserved crops (grass and maize silage) and supplementary concentrated feed
- Christmas trees are harvested

Vegetable harvesting; contact Ashurst Organics

Festivals; Remembrance; St Andrew's Day; Divali

Some school activities:

Looking at vegetables; different growing patterns above and below ground; harvesting; bringing in the crops at school and using for school dinners. Visit a farm locally that grows vegetables, compare this with the small scale production at school.

Christmas tree harvesting; look at a local producer. History of growing trees for Christmas; economics.

Other forestry in the area.

What are trees used for? Fires/power/furniture/building materials etc. Charcoal making.

Remembrance; why is this done, what is being done, history leading up to it.

December

What a farm does:

- Harvesting of winter vegetables (cauliflowers, beetroot, swede, parsnips and leeks)
- Turkeys and geese plucked in preparation for Christmas market.
- Conservation works take place such as planting, coppicing and laying of hedges; also work in farm woods, before the birds start nesting
- Farm maintenance of buildings, tracks, fences and machinery
- Holly and ivy gathering for Christmas decorations
- Fatstock shows are staged at major livestock markets

Conservation works; contact South Downs National Park

Festivals; Winter Solstice; Christmas

Some school activities:

Christmas preparations; turkeys, geese, vegetarian alternatives.
History of celebration of Christmas, from biblical teachings to Father Christmas in Coca Cola coloured robes.

Fatstock shows; why are these held. Animals as food.
Philosophical considerations about meat and vegetarians.
Different ways of looking at the world expressed by what people eat.

Learning about maintenance; farm structures to keep animals safe or prevent crops from being trampled.

Storage of crops and food, food safety.

January

What a farm does:

- Fruit trees are pruned to ensure a good crop later in the year
- Some flocks start lambing indoors to produce lamb ready for the traditional Easter market
- Conservation works take place such as planting, coppicing and laying of hedges; also work in farm woods, before the birds start nesting
- Farm maintenance of buildings, tracks, fences and machinery

Practical activity; Sussex Willow Weaving ; contact Dominic Porette

Festivals; New Year and Burns Night (Haggis with Neeps and Tatties)

Some school activities:

Learning about conservation works in Winter time. Why are woods coppiced; making things from coppiced willow. How to lay a hedge. Why is this done; why have a living boundary?

Plant and animal conservation within hedgerows. Birds and nests, how and why do they make them? Trying to make nests from natural materials in school; solving construction problems.

Burns Night meal with neeps and tatties from the school crops. Planning, preparing and enjoying together. Vegetarian alternative to Haggis for anyone who wants this!

February

What a farm does:

- Early lambing continues
- Orchard pruning continues
- Fungicide sprays are applied to crops showing signs of disease or organic methods used
- First top dressings of fertiliser are applied to winter sown arable crops
- Winter stubbles are ploughed and a seed bed is prepared for spring crops if the ground is dry enough

Practical Activity: Animal rescue; contact Sussex Wildlife

Festivals: Chinese New Year and Shrove Tuesday

Some school activities

Looking at why crops are treated for pests and how. Organic and chemical means. Life cycles, ecosystems, people using plants and animals for food. History of development of methods of agriculture designed to overcome pests.

Animal rescue locally; work of Sussex Wildlife and Trevor Weeks. What to do if you find an animal in need of help; why help?

How animals survive the winter and what they need, on farms and in the wild. Hibernation and sleep. Rhythms of nature.

Pancake making; why, how, history and culture. Science work with different kinds of batter to see which work and why. Make pancakes for the whole school for one meal.

March

What a farm does:

- Farmers continue planting spring cereal crops, barley, wheat and oats
- Main lambing season starts and housed ewes go out to grass
- Spring calving of dairy and beef cows
- Spring beef cattle sales held at livestock markets

Practical Activity: Lambing ; contact Mohair Centre

Festivals; Holi (end of winter in Hindu culture), St David's Day, St Patrick's Day, Easter (or April some years), Spring Equinox, Mother's Day.

Some school activities:

Lambing, birth, breeding animals; why and how at appropriate levels for the different age groups in school. Record births in a local flock over the spring. Twin births, orphan animals, keeping animals safe from predators.

Welsh and Irish national days and their Saints.

April

What a farm does:

- Fruit orchards begin to blossom
- Crop planting continues – maize, linseed, vining peas and game cover crops
- Turnout of winter housed dairy herds and beef cattle
- Grass and arable crops are fertilised

Practical Activity; Cheese making; contact High Weald Dairy

Festivals; St George's Day, Shakespeare's Birthday, Easter (some years)

Some school activities:

Signs of spring. Passage of the seasons. Scientific reasons for them and aesthetic appreciation.

Cheese making. Science and practical application. Research on the different kinds of cheese; soft, hard, blue etc, cheese made from different milks; cows/sheep/goats/buffalo. Try different cheeses. Include non-dairy cheese. Watch cheese being made, try the processes out, make cheese at school.

English national day and their Saint.

Shakespeare's birthday, whole school work on one of the plays at many different levels. Text, scenery, everything needed for a performance.

May

What a farm does:

- Fruit orchards in full blossom
- Oil seed rape in flower
- Arable crops are checked regularly for pests and disease and sprayed if required or organic methods used
- First silage of the year made from surplus grass to be fed to cattle over winter
- Sheep/goat shearing begins
- Early strawberries harvested
- Arable crops checked regularly for pests and disease and are sprayed if required or organic methods used
- Lambing season finishes

Practical activity: Sheep/goat shearing, weaving and spinning
contact Mohair Centre

Festivals: Mayday and Whitsun Morris Dancing : contacts Knots of May and Blackpowder Morris

Some school activities:

Flower to fruit; how this works. Bees as pollinators. Structure of flowers/fruit.

Oil seed rape; what is it, why is it grown? Food/fodder/fuel crops and how and why they are chosen. Modern and traditional crops. Looking at profit/conservation considerations.

Sheep/goat shearing; how, why, history. What is the fleece used for? Making things with fleece; felting, spinning, weaving, knitting.

Watch May day festivities and try to take part in Whitsun Morris dancing.

June

What a farm does:

- Salad vegetables and soft fruit harvested (cherries, gooseberries and strawberries)
- Hay making in full swing
- Second grass silage cut of the year taken
- Sheep shearing continues
- Dairy and beef cows mated now for calving in the spring

Jam Making; contact Ouse Valley Foods

Festivals; Queen's official birthday, Father's Day, Summer Solstice

Some school activities:

Why make jam? Food preservation. Sugar/heat/chemicals/irradiation. Simple and complicated ingredients. "E" numbers. reading food labels. Allergens.

Make jam from school fruit for all children to take home. If any leftover consider selling this for charity/to invest in more fruit plants/? Children to think about this and decide.

Harvest salad vegetables from school garden for meals.

Visit a farm to watch hay making. Why is it done? Traditional and newer methods. What is good and bad about them?

July

What a farm does:

- Harvesting of winter sown arable crops (oil seed rape, barley and wheat) commences using combine harvesters
- Grain is taken from the fields to the farm by trailer
- Baling of crop residues (mainly straw) starts
- Harvesting of soft fruit continues (raspberries, cherries, blueberries and black/redcurrants)

Practical activity: Harvesting; contact Spring Barn Farm

Festivals: Eid al-Fitr; Welsh Eisteddfod

Some school activities

Harvesting school crops.

Find out about combine harvesters.

History of farm machinery. Possible session driving a tractor for older pupils.

(August

- Harvesting of arable crops reaches its peak
- Straw is transported to livestock farms to be used for winter bedding and feeding
- Early cultivations (ploughing, seedbed cultivations, liming etc) and sowing of arable crops begins
- Third cuts of grass silage taken (depending on how well grass has grown))