

## **Farm Manager's AGM Report - Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

What a difference a year can make. We only had 3 months into this year before all changed, Covid 19 certainly did that.

As of March 2020 lockdown changed our way of working; like many other businesses we had to adapt the best way we could. Our priorities at that moment forward were keeping the farm open for our students to return to, financially secure and of course Virus free. With a skeleton staff of four and three volunteers, we managed to keep the animals fed, mucked out and healthy, whilst behind the scenes the Trustees worked hard to secure our financial situation through grants and implement health and safety precautions. As the months went on, we were able to open up to certain students; adults at first, bringing some support staff off furlough. Students were later brought back as and when lockdown eased, which also bought life back to the farm, be it restricted and in bubble form.

All the activities had also been put on hold including Riding for Disabled and Equine Assisted Learning, but as previously mentioned the animals still had to be tended to and exercised. This led to us putting one of our RDA horses out on loan to an already 'Horsey' family, where the first three months he was enjoying life of hacking out and the occasional Dressage activity. Unfortunately, he became ill with a degenerative bone disease and sadly the difficult decision was made to have him put to sleep. This hit all staff, and all involved with RDA hard; he was a superb RDA horse, well loved by everyone who met him and kind to those who rode him, he is sadly missed.

Sadly, we are unable to do the student and volunteer awards due to this year being cut short, but I would like to add a Statement of Thanks to our students, volunteers and staff:

firstly, our staff who have shown remarkable resilience in returning to work under such difficult circumstances;

our volunteers who right from the start supported me, Ashley and Lucy be it at a two-metre distance, working alongside us looking after the animals;

not forgetting the students, all be it returning in slow stages back to the farm and embracing all the difficult changes that lie before them.

Thank you to everyone whether you are employed by the farm or on the outside supporting everything we do. This has been a difficult year, it's hard when we cannot all come together in our wonderful environment, but I can guarantee that everyone's efforts have not gone unnoticed.

**STAY SAFE,**

Wendy Self Farm Manager