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Farm Life in Lockdown

On 26 March 2020 life at Larkrise Farm became the 'new normal' for the foreseeable future as we temporarily closed our doors to all our students and half our staff were put on furlough leave. The farm had never been so quiet; it's funny what you miss in lockdown.

Our dedicated, core staff kept calm and carried on. We have tried to keep the animals to their routines as much as possible, as this is important for their wellbeing too. However, our animals had no idea about Covid 19 and quite frankly didn't care as long as they were fed, watered, and had clean bedding. Oh, to be a goat!

Speaking of which, our two pygmy goats Donald and Daisy are loving lockdown as they are free-ranging from site to site, munching at anything that gets in their way, vegetation wise that is. Unfortunately, they now need to be put on a strict diet, in keeping it seems with many humans on lockdown.

Wendy, our Farm Manager, has been doing her best to exercise as many horses and ponies as possible - not an easy task with so many. Merlin, one of our cobs, needs constant persuasion not to indulge in a stable duvet day! The end of March saw Wendy busy chain-harrowing the fields. This had to stop because the dry spell, for which we had all eagerly awaited, meant the fields were too dry for our chain harrow and for once we were praying for more rain. This fortunately arrived at the end of April, so more chain-harrowing continued.

At the beginning of April, a sly fox took advantage of the quiet and was seen visiting the yard and eyeing up our chickens. Marley and Rhuben, Wendy's dogs came to the rescue and, exceptionally, were allowed out on 'Fox Patrol'. Unsurprisingly, we have not seen the fox since, and I am pleased to report all the poultry are safe and well.

On 21 April 2020 we were reminded that nature also 'keeps calm and carries on' when we started lambing. This year it was a surreal experience with so few of us to enjoy the new births in situ, but, thanks to social media, we were able to share the excitement via Facebook and our Website. Our final ewe lamb was born on 3 May and we all breathed a huge sigh of relief. We have 7 fit and healthy lambs in total, from 4 ewes.

We are eagerly awaiting more news from Boris on 10 May, in the hope that the necessary restrictions which have been imposed will be relaxed and we can plan ahead to welcome the return of at least some of our students before the summer. We have missed them all terribly but have been so relieved to know they are keeping safe. Whilst we love all our gorgeous animals dearly, Larkrise just isn't Larkrise without our wonderful, cheeky students.

Take care and keep safe everyone. Looking forward to brighter times soon.

Ashley Wicks, Assistant Farm Manager, Larkrise Community Farm