

The Agricultural section of Usk Show is unique in that we judge a whole range of classes 'On Farm' throughout the year.

Since the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001 there are stringent legal procedures for the movement of animals. So, for example, if you are a sheep farmer and buy a new ram in, no animals, whether it be sheep, cattle, pigs, can leave the farm (except directly to slaughter) for seven days. September is one of the busiest months of the year for Livestock Sales and the Show is right in the middle of it!! The On Farm Classes ensure that all farmers can be included in the Show – there is a prestigious trophy, The Roger Morgan, Graig Olway, Trophy for the farmer getting the most points in these 'On Farm' classes.

We start judging in January with the Silage Competitions – many of you will have seen the tall Maize plants in many fields in the county. This will be harvested in September, put in a massive concrete bunker type building, a clamp. Covered in plastic where it will slowly pickle in the air free conditions. The same happens to grass but farmers will cut the grass every six weeks or so from May to September; the pickling is the same.



Silage is the mainstay of the winter rations for animals so it is important to have the highest quality you can. When it is judged, we

look at the neatness of the clamp, the sweetness of the grass and maize and the analysis which is done by Mole Valley Farmers.



To ensure good quality silage, excellent grass quality is vital. Grass starts growing in earnest after the trials of winter. Often first cuts of grass are taken in early May but it depends very much on your system and how many animals have grazed the fields overwinter. Fertilizer is spread over the fields to enhance the growth rate. The grass fields or 'Leys' are judged in May when the grass is at its sweetest.



Throughout the summer the livestock are judged: from groups of In Calf Dairy Heifers, Suckler Cow Herds, Beef Cattle with the Sheep flocks the last, usually in late September.



The growing crops: Wheat, Barley, Oats and Oilseed Rape, are judged in late June/ early July. These are so dependent on the weather for their growth and maturing so every year is different.



Finally, in early October, the growing Maize is judged just before harvesting. Good quality maize has good sized 'cobs' – just like the corn on the cobs we eat – with tall leafy stalks.



And so, the year is complete... none of this is possible without the goodwill, experience, and dedication of a group of On Farm Stewards who drive the Judges from farm to farm. Regrettably, under the Covid restrictions this year, this has not been possible. All the Judges are quite envious of the wonderful county of Monmouthshire; are in awe of the amazing quality of the livestock and crops and so supportive of Usk Show.

We all look forward to 2021 and very much hope that the Covid restrictions will be less draconian so that Usk Show, better than ever, can return.