

Whistlemas

'I've heard enough of this rubbish' said the man in the flat cap and overalls, 'you don't know what really went on'. The chap in the jacket and tie looked somewhat taken aback and turned to face the speaker. 'I can assure you, sir that I am fully conversant with all the facts' he stated.

'Look' said the cap, 'who do you think gained a bundle from this job, not a haulier like me, I had to lay up my lorry. It was the big boys with the smart talking contract merchants who had their feet under the Ministry table. Them and the builders with their diggers and cleaners, blokes taken from the back room of the Nags Head. Most of them had never been anywhere near a cow let alone knew the difference between a virus and a can of paint.

My brother lost his sheep and I know many of them down North Tawton way who were tearing their hair out with worry. Some thought they wanted it as soon as possible to get it over with, others fought like hell to keep it out and they still got it. One or two did nothing at all, a bit of disinfectant for appearance sake. It just didn't seem to make any difference. If you were going to get it you got it. And other poor beggars were smothered in smoke and then went down with it, cursing whoever said the fires were safe.

And what about the extra vets? Half of them couldn't speak our language and the other half didn't know where they were going. Some said it looks like the disease and people worried and worried and then the tests said they were alright. Others took one look and called in the shooters there and then, so before tea time there was just a pile of bodies and a horrible smell of disinfectant and allsorts. The blokes who really earned their money were the ones who had to handle the rotting beasts. Legs falling off and guts exploding. How they managed to do it day after day I don't know.

The local vets tried to help but they became just as frustrated as the farmers. They couldn't go anywhere in case they were trapped on the farm. Emergencies only. I bet BT have made a fortune out of all this. All those calls to mobile phones at peak rates. If it hadn't been for the movement licences we would have seen vets on the dole. Queuing up with the likes of me, eh, because nobody was taking their Tiddles out to a country surgery for her claws to be clipped. My missus didn't leave our place unless she had to and the closest it came to us was three miles. Many of the farmers wives were marooned for weeks and only had post and food left at the end of the lane.

And how many are going to carry on? Not my brother, not immediately anyway. At ten pounds an hour he set about cleaning up and that kept him going. Something to do and some money coming in. Except that they weren't very quick with the cash but he knew he'd be alright eventually. Some of the big boys are right on, buying up other herds and having the cleaning done professionally. Professionally, that's a laugh. I should have gone into that. A pressure washer and coveralls all supplied and splash a bit of disinfectant around before you go home.

The state some of the animals were in, early on, was a disgrace. All the rules and regulations and the poor beggars couldn't be moved onto a bit of grass. And because of all the restrictions at harvest time many say they may not have enough fodder for the winter. Millions is being spent by the various charities to keep people going. That's one thing that has come out of this. Money raised for farmers by all sorts of people doing little things, schoolkids, clubs, companies, families. People having wedding anniversaries and asking for Green Welly Fund donations instead of silver salvers. So many people showing concern and feeling helpless to influence what was happening. I suppose you could say that some people will support anything from hedgehogs to trees but their help has given countryfolk a bit of an eye opener. Not all the townies want to kill off the country ways.

And what about vaccination? Well what about it, you say you know all the facts, tell us what you think you know'.

The man with the jacket looked at his notes as a lady asked whether he knew if it was true that next time all the deer would be shot.

The above is a possible scenario for a Psycho Drama coming to a venue near you. An alternative to the formal inquiry.

Richard can be contacted on 01363 866353 or rgard@agmed.freeseve.co.uk.

Richard Gard
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