

VERDERERS' COURT

Wednesday 18th November 2020

ANNOUNCEMENTS & DECISIONS

MARKING FEES 2021

Marking fees have remained at the same level since 2012 and I am pleased to announce that there will be no increase next year.

Marking fees for 2021 are therefore the same as this year:

Ponies & Donkeys on the Forest £24.00 per head
Ponies & Donkeys on the Commons £12.00 being ½ of the Forest marking fee
Cattle on the Forest £24.00
Cattle on the Commons £3.00 being 1/8 of the Forest marking fee
Sheep on the Forest £8.00
Sheep on the Commons £4.00
Pigs on the Forest £4.00
Pigs on the Commons £2.00 per head

Please remember that marking fees are due from the 1st January. Under our Byelaws, the deadline for payment of all marking fees for continuously depastured animals is 31st March. If not paid by 31st March, you will not be eligible to join the Verderers Grazing Scheme. Marking fees for animals which are not continuously depastured are due before the animals are turned out. It is the responsibility of commoners to volunteer payment of marking fees, not the responsibility of the Agister to chase you for them.

CATTLE MARKING

Earlier this year the Verderers decided, in the light of the issues raised by the Covid-19 pandemic, to instruct the Agisters not to mark cattle.

We have now reviewed that decision in the light of the presentment we received at our October Court from three commoners and the current circumstances and have decided that we will not physically mark cattle for 2021. The decision is based on minimising health risks to our staff and also to commoners, which are thought to outweigh the benefits of marking.

Cattle owners are requested to send in a list of the ministry ear tag numbers for the cattle they wish to mark, and pay the appropriate marking fee, preferably by bank transfer having first contacted their agister to obtain a marking fee receipt number to use as a reference. Ear tag lists and payment will not be accepted until after 1st January. Owners will be expected to only include cattle that are in acceptable condition, eligible to be depastured, with no ring worm or forest eye, and bearing a legible brand tag. The Agisters will be vigilant looking out for compliance, and reacting swiftly to any issues.

Because we are not physically marking the cattle, the linkage to the TB testing window is irrelevant, hence no marking for 2021 will be processed until January 2021. Some Commoners rely on the Agisters to help with their TB test while attending for marking purposes. It is felt inappropriate to assist with the TB test if the Agisters are not there to mark cattle, so we have instructed the Agisters to communicate to those commoners that they will need to arrange alternative assistance.

Whilst we will keep the matter under review, we think it unlikely that this decision will change for 2021.

NEW GATE AND STEPS IN PROPERTY BOUNDARY AT IPLEY

At our last Court Mr Eccles brought to the Court's attention, a new gate and steps hewn out of the bank on the boundary of an adjacent property, to give access to the Open Forest at Ipley Green. Mr Eccles wondered if this bank had any historical geological or archaeological merits? It is thought the bank is private property.

We have referred the matter to Forestry England.