

Farming Today

By Kevin Prince



Yellow increasingly mellows

Kevin Prince has wide experience of farming and rural business in Hampshire, where he lives near Andover, and across southern England as a director in the Adkin consultancy. His family also run a diversified farm with commercial lets, holiday cottages and 800 arable acres.

ANYONE who has managed to get out and about during lockdown may have noticed a marked change in our landscape this year.

The reason is that much of the significant eye-searing yellow has disappeared thanks to the reluctance of many farmers to grow oil seed rape (OSR) because of a combination of unfavourable weather in recent years and a ban on neonicotinoids (neonics) which was introduced a few years back. Neonics controlled cabbage stem flea beetle, which ravages OSR just as it establishes, and were the seed treatment favoured to defeat this pest but fears that they were damaging the bee population led to a UK ban.

The argument over neonics has been turning the agricultural air

blue for some years and now there's a chance the same could happen to our landscape, too. If OSR can't be grown then something has to take its place and among the candidates is linseed which has been tried before and which those aware of change in the countryside may have noticed.

Linseed, or flax, has a distinctive blue flower which follows the sun so the hue of the fields changes slightly as the flowers turn as the day progresses. Even more interesting is that each day sees a different flower open on the same plant to carry on the sun worship unlike OSR, which develops multiple flowers on the same stems to give the vibrant blast of yellow.

Things might change again as a group of growers is carrying out largescale field trials to try to discover better ways to defeat the pesky flea beetle and get OSR through the critical establishment phase. It's important for many reasons, not least among them that OSR was an important break crop to grow between cereal crops to reduce the risk of disease in the cereal crop and improve soil fertility. The demand hasn't



Oilseed rape: acreage declining

diminished in line with the cropping area wilting, with the result that OSR has to be imported from elsewhere. The irony that the replacement producers have access

to neonics is not lost on UK farmers. Not so long ago, 756,000 hectares (that's around 1.5 million acres in the old money measuring system) in the UK were growing OSR, hence

those huge yellow ocular blasts in our landscape. Next season it's thought that fewer than 300,000 hectares will be doing so.

On my own family's farm further north we have had an almost total failure of the oil seed rape crop this year. Ironically this was not to do with flea beetle but simply because of an appalling growing season in terms of weather which was too dry when it needed to be wet and far too wet when it needed to be dry! We are going to stick with it for this coming year but many growers will look to alternatives.

While the fight goes on to prevent chlorinated chicken and hormone-fed beef turning up in our supermarkets after a trade deal is struck with the US following our EU departure, it can be seen that standards have already weakened elsewhere.

It's strange that preserving food standards has so far failed to be enshrined in law via the Agriculture Bill currently passing through Parliament although the previous version of this Bill made little mention of food production at all so some might regard the new effort as progress.

Exchange and Mart

150 years on the clock and still going.

Master the art of haggling

Despite a car being the second largest financial purchase people will ever make after their house, the majority of buyers pay the asking price because they don't like haggling. But did you know that haggling could significantly reduce the price? Here are our top tips to help buyers bag a bargain:

Know what you want and what it's worth

The first step is to know the market and do some research, this will give you the confidence when securing a deal and will convince the seller that you are a serious buyer. Decide on what your needs are and what you're willing to compromise on. Set a budget in your mind - look at similar used cars to get an idea of what they're selling for.

Know what you're buying

When the dream car turns up, it's time for you to think with your head

not your heart. Always conduct a vehicle history check to see if it has something to hide; is it an insurance write-off, stolen or has it got a dodgy mileage? Also consider having an expert look over the mechanics and pay attention to the bodywork for signs of rust or a quick touch up with the spray paint.

Open Low

Buyers should go in with an offer that's lower than the going rate for similar cars on the market, then let the seller negotiate up towards a price that suits both. If buying a new car from a dealer, it's worth remembering that many car industry sales targets are set on a monthly basis. That means it's easier to get a bigger discount towards the end of the month, whether it's a reduced price or optional extras.

Keep an ear out for inconsistent stories about the car's history and don't be afraid to walk away.

Equally, never pay more for a car than you can afford. There are plenty of deals out there, so never settle for a bad deal. A car is an investment so don't make any rash decisions.

Haggling 'Dos and don'ts'

Expert haggling tips: what NOT to say

- I really like this car.
- Have you sold many cars today?
- What sort of discounts are people getting on cars at the moment?
- Please can I have a discount?
- Are you sure you can't meet my budget?
- Is that all that my old car is worth?
- What will it cost if I pay in cash?

Expert haggling tips: what you SHOULD say

- I'm interested in buying this car from you, but to do so I need more than you are offering in part exchange on my old car.



- I'm ready to do a deal today at the right price or I'm a cash buyer.
- Has this car ever been in an accident?
- How much discount will you give me?
- Can you meet my budget - if not, I can buy elsewhere...
- If your manager is the one making the decision, can I talk to them?

- I've seen a better deal at... (a nearby competitor). Make sure you really have or you'll look silly.
- If we can agree on £xxxx (price) then you have a deal.

Now you know the best way to get the right price, you need to find that perfect car. Search thousands of cars local to you at exchangeandmart.co.uk

Search over 100,000 cars at www.exchangeandmart.co.uk