

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
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Inquiry needed into claims of sheep dip 'poisoning' on farms

Everyone has the right to be safe at work.

So claims that farmers became ill as a result of following government orders to use sheep dip are concerning.

A growing number of sheep farmers allege that they developed health problems after exposure to sheep dip containing chemicals called organophosphates (OP). Farmers were required by law to dip their sheep with OPs to control serious infestations such as sheep scab from 1976 to 1992, when mandatory dipping came to an end. Many who went about their daily work in accordance with the law claim that they went on to suffer problems including memory loss, dizziness, nausea and anxiety. These are serious allegations.

A national campaign group – The Sheep Dip Sufferers Support Group – was set up earlier this year, the issue has been raised in parliament and more case studies are beginning to emerge.

These include the experiences of retired Norfolk agricultural worker Paul Claxton that we have reported today.

He believes he developed regular headaches and occasional panic attacks after exposure to the chemicals, and he believes the government did not know about or warn of the risks at the time.

There are questions to be answered, but so far the government has rejected calls for an inquiry.

A statement from Defra points to an independent review which concluded that the chemicals “do not cause important long-term neurological toxicity in adults” and hopes this will suffice. But as the volume of evidence mounts, there needs to be a full and transparent inquiry.

We call on the government to act now. An issue that affects this many people cannot be swept under the carpet.

Allergy rules action call

Since December pub landlords in our region have had to say which foods have allergens in.

While we acknowledge the need for the EU food allergy rules, it has led to a Norfolk pub having to ditch its meals.

It is easy to understand the plight of Peter Edge, landlord of the White Swan, in North Walsham, as like a lot of other people, he is not an expert in what foods may trigger an allergy, such as celery and sesame seeds.

While Mr Edge must be applauded for allowing customers to bring in their own food, we also urge the food standards authorities to do all they can to make things as easy as possible for our hard-pressed pubs and eateries.

It would be shame if the EU Food Information for Consumers Regulation leads to fewer of our pubs serving locally-sourced food.

Life-saving efforts

To have a loved one collapse in front of you must be a terrifying experience.

But Tracey Salisbury managed to keep focused and performed CPR on her husband, Barry, when his heart stopped.

She was assisted by 999 call handler Zoe Shawki, who guided her through the process.

Both Tracey and Zoe deserve recognition for keeping calm in such a hectic situation.

Their efforts ensured that Barry survived the ordeal.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ This juvenile little owl looks so grumpy but just so comical as well, says Andrew Brown, who captured this image for EDP readers. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication, visit our website at www.iwitness24.co.uk

I'm taking a punt on the origins of the word 'quant'

Peter
Trudgill



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

Quant is one of our local dialect words. As you'll know if you grew up in a Norfolk family – especially in the Fens or the Broads – a quant is a long pole for propelling a punt or a wherry; and to quant is a verb meaning to push a boat along using a quant.

The English Dialect Dictionary shows the word quant as occurring only in East Anglia, Kent and Sussex.

It gives a number of quotations, including one from the 1890 book Noah's Ark – a Tale of the Norfolk Broads, by Darley Dale (who was in reality the author Francesca Maria Steele): “The man, seizing the quant, worked away with a will, supplementing the wind by poling her along”.

Another comes from the 1895 book Birds, Beasts and Fishes of the Norfolk Broadland, by Peter Henry Emerson, who was an author and photographer specialising in marsh and fen scenes: “If a good quant goes in after the pike, he will soon ‘muddle’ him up”.

The etymology of quant seems to be difficult, but Walter Skeat (1835–1912), who was Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge, and president of the English Dialect Society, had an interesting idea



■ Punting or 'quanting' across the almost still River Ant, Eric Edwards heads for the reed beds at How Hill. This picture was taken circa 1987. Picture: ARCHANT

about it. He suggested in his etymological dictionary that punt and quant might originally have had the same Indo-European origin.

Quant could go back to Ancient Celtic quonto, which was related to Latin contos and Ancient Greek kontos ‘punting-pole’; while punt came from Latin ponto ‘punt’, which was borrowed by the Romans from Gaulish, the pre-Roman Celtic language of France. Skeat reckoned that ponto also went back to quonto, which is a definite possibility since ancient Celtic qu- did change to p- in Gaulish – as well as in Brittonic Celtic, the ancestor of Welsh, Cornish and Breton.

Irish and Scottish Gaelic, which did not undergo this change, are often referred to as “Q-Celtic”, while the Brittonic languages are known as “P-Celtic”.

The Gaelic word for son is mac (with the kw sound represented by qu having changed to the k sound represented by c), while in mediaeval Welsh, son was map. Gaelic surnames, of course, often begin with Mac; and Welsh names like Pritchard come from Ap-Richard, where the ap derives from map.

I would like to think that, back here in Norfolk, our two words punt and quant were originally the same word. And maybe they really were.

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For Christ himself is our peace.

Eph 2:14

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