



Heart of England Farms Ltd

Breeders of Quality Game Stock

Established 1983

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Dear Customers,

It would be usual in January of each year to be writing this newsletter in an up-beat mood, reminding you all of the marvellous season you have just enjoyed shooting our quality birds and encouraging you to order copious amounts for next season. The shooting season has been rewarding for most, with good returns and strong order books throughout, as the shooting industry continues to go from strength to strength.

If only I had written this letter between Christmas and the New Year, it would have been full of positive statements and so very much easier to write, as at that time I was planning to hold prices for the fourth consecutive year.

However the printing of our price list was delayed when I began checking prices for all the major inputs used for rearing game birds and our suppliers replied with universal increases for this season. No items that we will purchase have decreased in cost this season or even remained at last years' levels, which in previous years has helped us to hold our prices.

Having concluded that price increases on both chicks and poults were unavoidable I was calculating just how much extra was needed to cover my increased costs when avian influenza 'bird flu' was confirmed in game birds in Lancashire. Since that announcement the game bird industry has been thrown into turmoil with the threat of increased restrictions being imposed and the possibility of further outbreaks leading to a shortage of birds. Shoots are understandably concerned and customers of the affected premises are keen to secure their birds from an alternative source. We have therefore come under customer pressure for stock at a time of year when we were not expecting it and when we are already very busy with penning breeding birds.

To stabilise our order book and to off-set potential risk we have introduced the following new conditions for this season:

- We will initially only be taking orders from existing customers and limiting these to the same dates and numbers ordered in 2016.
- Any increase in numbers or requested change of dates can be taken as 'provisional' but cannot be confirmed until early April when all orders are placed and deposits have been paid.
- A non-refundable deposit to be paid with confirmation to secure the order and to spread any potential risk between us as the supplier, and yourselves as the buyer.
- Deposit required:
 - 25% of the value on eggs;
 - 25% of the value on chicks;
 - 50% of the value on poults.

Prices to increase in line with anticipated increased costs of production (see price list enclosed) but generally 2p per chick and 10 or 15p per poult.

Early and mid-season pheasant and mallard eggs have been removed from the price list. Orders for Redleg partridge eggs usually supplied from our own breeding stock may later need to be substituted with imported eggs.

The condition requiring deposits from all our customers may at first seem draconian however at this early stage in the season we have to make decisions in our business without knowing the longer term implications of this latest AI outbreak or where it may lead and its potential effects on all our businesses.

I hope that our customers, many of whom have been loyal to us for many years and honourable with their payments, will understand that during these troubling and difficult times I am unable to carry all the financial risk alone.

As an existing customer it is only fair that you have first choice of the stock bred from our overwintered hens. To help me with this allocation please let me know as soon as possible your requirements. Should you not be requiring any of the birds which were delivered last year please notify us as soon as possible which will allow them to be offered to the numerous enquiries being received at the moment.

The simple fact that we produce 90% of our birds from our own over-wintered stock should hopefully mean we are in a stronger position than if we relied on imports or eggs from other areas.

In such difficult times for us all I trust you agree with the measures I have introduced and hope that next time we speak the situation is clearer if not much improved.

I wish you all a successful coming season and hope the weather becomes our main cause for concern!

Yours sincerely



Ole and Judy Gronning

