

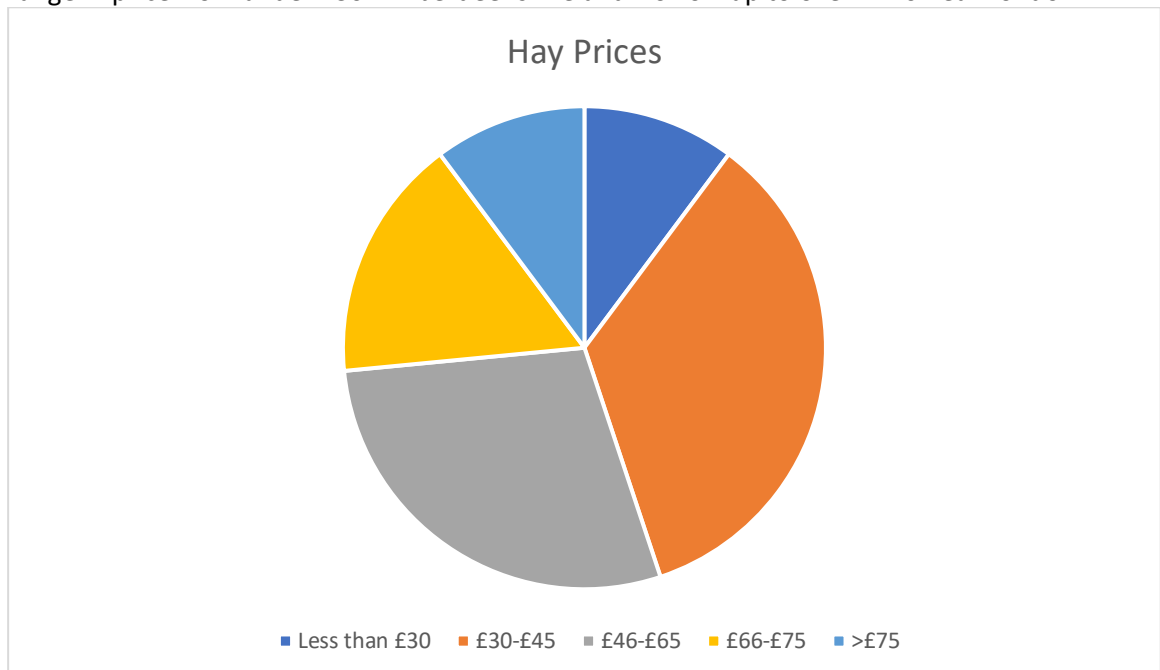
Equine Sector Updates

Trade – Claire Williams

- Like many other areas of business the equestrian trade is being impacted by the rising costs of running businesses. The recent budget in particular will hit retail hard as rates increase with the loss of post-covid measures and the further increase on the national minimum wage pushes overheads up further.

A survey of retail members showed that turnover had remained static compared to the previous year for more than 60%. A similar pattern was seen in staffing with less than 20% increasing staff numbers whilst 60% had not replaced staff that had left.

- It will be no news to report that hay continues to be the main area of concern with a recent survey on hay prices around the country yielding widely varying results. Large round bales range in price from under £30 in Aberdeenshire and Norfolk up to over £120 near London.



The spread was

10% paid less than £30

34% paid £30 – 45

28% paid £46- 65

16% paid £66-£75

10% paid more than £75

- On the safety front whilst one of the rare product categories that is seeing growth in the market, ironically supply is facing many challenges with bottle necks in testing causing real delays in deliveries.
- There are no changes currently envisaged on the standards front with hats and progress on the airvest standard has been delayed by the change of the country holding the secretariat of the EU Working Group to France. Time will tell how soon work can be restarted on this.
- The FEI Working group on safety vests (of all types) is progressing with a research brief now prepared and meetings with both manufacturers and riders taking place to establish information required to feed into the research work which will provide data to enable the development of safer garments.

- A new Conference on safety related matters (primarily on rider safety equipment) is being planned for April 2026.
- On the feed front, manufacturers are facing challenges on the availability of key feed additives in the UK and Europe. The work on the SPS agreement is causing resource shortages in the FSA, responsible for the approval of these.
- Feed companies are also facing issues exporting feed into Europe containing Vitamin D, implementing as the EU is a requirement for Export Health Certificates that had not been required until recently. This is adding upwards of £400 onto each shipment in addition to the time added to the process. The SPS agreement will, it is hoped, remove these non-tariff barriers.