

Confused about the Countryside

Britain is a nation of townies, blissfully unaware about the wildlife and nature on our doorstep, reveals a new survey by farming charity LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming). Fifteen per cent of adults didn't know that a dairy cow is female, half weren't aware that robins live in the UK all year round and one in five didn't know that acorns come from oak trees.

The research, which comes ahead of Open Farm Sunday (June 12) where 100s of farms will open their gates to the public, also revealed that 50 per cent of those surveyed thought that bees made honey from pollen, not nectar. Meanwhile four in ten didn't know that a deciduous tree was one that loses its leaves in autumn.

The public seems to have little idea on farmers' roles as guardians of the countryside, as 95 per cent did not know that farmers manage over three quarters of the UK land mass and less than one in four knew that farmers are responsible for looking after most of the hedgerows, walls and fences outside towns.

Farmer and TV presenter Adam Henson said: "As a farmer I am passionate about the great British countryside, and like most farmers I spend a considerable amount of my time in looking after it – along with all the wildlife that live there too. I'm disappointed to see that so many people seem to be confused about the countryside and the role that farmers like me play in nurturing wildlife and tending the land."

The English oak is considered to be our national tree (there's even a Royal Oak day) but 20% of those questioned didn't know this was where acorns came from - believing they came from either birch, beech or elm trees instead. Knowledge was worst among men, with only $\frac{3}{4}$ knowing where acorns came from – and nearly one in ten thinking they came from sycamore trees. As anyone who has one in their garden or local park should know, the oak tree is a deciduous tree i.e. it loses its leaves in autumn. The research though revealed one in five believed it is a tree that has leaves all year round.

The robin is another national symbol, recognisable to all with its red breast and featured every year on copious Christmas cards. Maybe its association with winter time accounts for the fact that only 53% knew it can be found all year round in the UK. But two thirds of respondents didn't know that one of the other most common British birds, the sparrow is also found here all year round – yet one in ten thought cuckoos could be seen for 12 months of the year and one in six thought the same of turtle doves.

Additional findings show that a quarter of 18-24 year olds and one in five 25-34 year olds didn't know that tadpoles become frogs. As well as wildlife, those surveyed are worryingly unclear about road signs found in the countryside. Three in ten people could not identify the correct meaning for this sign – frogs or toads crossing – while one in six believe it is a warning indicating to 'beware of frogs!'



Caroline Drummond, Chief Executive of LEAF said "Farmers play a vital role in caring for the countryside. They are responsible for nurturing the soil, the plants and the trees and protecting and caring for all the animals, insects and birds that live there. Open Farm Sunday is a great opportunity for all the family to get out onto a farm to discover more about the link between food, farming and nature. With hundreds of farms opening nationwide you'll be able to meet the farmers who care for our beautiful countryside and its wildlife, and find out how your food is produced."

At LEAF, we are passionate about environmentally responsible farming and connecting people with food and farming."

To find a farm that's opening near you, log onto www.farmsunday.org.

-ENDS-

For further information and images, or to arrange an interview please contact:

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Editor's note:

- All stats One Poll Survey, 2,000 adults May 2011
- LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming) www.leafuk.org is a national charity that helps farmers produce food with care for the environment, while working with their local community
- The sixth annual Open Farm Sunday on 12 June 2011 provides a great opportunity for the public to truly get to know how their food is produced and how the countryside around them is cared for
- Visitors will be able to learn from farmers themselves how natural plant and insect species are encouraged to thrive alongside crops, they will get a close-up look at farm animals and see how the needs of wildlife are balanced with modern food production
- LEAF organises Open Farm Sunday and supports farmers with putting on an event that is not only enjoyable, but gives visitors a really fascinating insight into aspects of the countryside that they would not usually see or experience on an average day out
- LEAF supports both LEAF and non-LEAF member farmers by hosting a number of workshops across the country with practical advice and tips for organising successful events. LEAF also provides free promotional support materials and an interactive online event database to register details of farmer events
- Food carrying the LEAF Marque logo shows that it has been grown by farmers who are committed to looking after the countryside and the environment. LEAF farmers are subject to an independent LEAF Audit, designed to help them meet the change in demands placed on operations by legislation, the marketplace, community and the industry
- An increasing number of farmers are signing up to support LEAF, to demonstrate how they are integrating modern farming with environmental conservation
- Principal sponsors for Open Farm Sunday 2011 are: ASDA, Defra, Farmers Weekly, Frontier Agriculture, John Deere, LEAF Marque, Natural England, National Farmers Union, Syngenta, Waitrose, Warburtons. Additional sponsors include: M&S, DairyCo, EBLEX, GrowHow, HGCA.