



As more wet weather is set to batter the UK this weekend, farmers are concerned about the impact on fodder stocks for next winter.

PICTURE: John Eveson

Heightened disease and feed risk amid 'chaotic' wet weather

► Follows wettest June on record

By Olivia Midgley

MORE heavy rain is on the way this weekend and will mark a 'chaotic' run of weather, experts have warned.

Forecasters have predicted large amounts of rainfall today (Friday) and tomorrow, with the Midlands, the north of England

and parts of Scotland being worst hit.

The Met Office said 20-40mm (0.7-1.5in) will fall in some areas over the weekend, but others could see as much as 60mm (2.4in).

It comes after the Met Office confirmed double the average amount of rain fell last month, making it the wettest June since records began in 1910. It was also the coldest June for 21 years, with a mean temperature of 12.3degC.

Jet stream

Meteorologists said the jet stream, a narrow band of fast-flowing easterly winds high in the atmosphere, had contributed to the horrendous weather.

The Met Office's Charlie Pow-

What is the jet stream?

WITH a big impact on UK weather, the jet stream can take the form of an eastward airflow or a 'meandering river'.

When the jet stream meanders north and south, instead of making its more usual eastward progress, it becomes

'blocked'. This blocking pattern affects surface pressure and, without a jet stream to blow the weather system through, can cause high amounts of rainfall, which the UK has seen over the last three months.

Source: Met Office

ell said the low pressure which had brought the heavy rain would move away to the North Sea and into Scandinavia on Sunday, leaving a more settled outlook for the beginning of next week. However, more showers (and sunshine) are expected.

Farmers and growers have once again been left exasperated by the extreme conditions and rural insurer NFU Mutual has been inundated with calls since the torrential rain began.

The NFU's Rachael Gillbanks added: "Even if we were to have a dry spell, the waterlogged ground makes it impossible to travel. Members are concerned about the potential impact on fodder for next winter, with good quality silage likely to be in very short supply."

Contractors said they faced heavy demand to cut silage where there was a break in the weather, but farmers were struggling to get it dry enough to cut and clamp.

Vets have also warned of a resurgence in worm problems, especially in lambs.

Fly strike

John Macfarlane of Alnorthumbria Veterinary Group said: "The wet weather has a concertina effect. Farmers need dry weather for clipping sheep and the combination of a full fleece, worm problems and warm weather is leading to fly strike."

Another effect of the long-term wet weather may be Rumen Fluke in cattle. The parasite is ingested by cattle grazing previously waterlogged pastures.

Call for abstraction crack-down

MPs are calling on the Government to take swifter action to slow the environmental damage caused by over-abstraction of water.

A report by the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Efra) Committee also urged Ministers to set more ambitious targets to increase levels of metering.

Efra Committee chairman Anne McIntosh MP said: "The reform of abstraction licenses must be brought forward to protect against the effect of severe droughts such as the one we saw earlier this year."

"Defra must work with Ofwat and the Environment Agency to tackle urgently those abstractions which are already causing severe damage to our rivers."

The NFU said farmers and growers must have continued and fair access to water.

The reform of abstraction licenses must be brought forward
ANNE McINTOSH

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