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THE ROYAL AGRICULTURAL BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 24th November 2011

RABI links with FCN to extend confidential helpline service

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution (RABI) is linking up with Farm Crisis Network to extend the operating hours of its helpline. From 1st December, callers using the confidential 01865 727888 will be able to talk to someone during the evening and at weekends as well as during office hours.

Currently callers facing a welfare crisis can only speak to a member of the RABI welfare team during office hours, with an answerphone service available at other times. From the beginning of December, calls made outside office hours will be connected to FCN's confidential helpline, which is available from 7.00am until 11.00pm every day of the year.

Announcing the collaboration, RABI chief executive Paul Burrows said: "We are very aware that crises are not restricted to office hours and that the most pressing need for callers on our helpline is to be able to talk to someone, not have to leave an answerphone message. It is also important that confidentiality is maintained at all times.

"I am delighted that FCN, with their experienced and understanding team of volunteer helpline operators, has agreed to handle our emergency calls outside office hours. All messages and necessary information will then be passed to the RABI welfare team for their action at the earliest possible opportunity."

FCN's chief executive, Charles Smith, welcomed the initiative: "As members of the Farming Help group, FCN and RABI have worked closely together for the past 12 years and this is a natural extension to the joint support already available for those in distress in the farming community. Combining the FCN volunteers' practical experience and knowledge of the industry with RABI's financial support and understanding of benefit schemes provides a lifeline to those in need."

The RABI helpline, which was set up in 1998 during the BSE crisis, enables callers to speak confidentially to a member of the welfare department. At the height of the 2001 foot and mouth epidemic, when three lines were being manned round the clock, RABI staff were handling up to 300 calls a day for several months.

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Notes for editors follows ...

The royal agricultural charity providing financial support to the farming community past, present and future

President: HRH The Duke of Gloucester Chairman: Julian Sayers FRICS FAAV FRAGS

Notes for editors

The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution is the national charity for those involved in farming in England and Wales. Established in 1860, it assists all those in need in the farming community. While the main focus of RABI's work has always been to support retired and disabled it also provides assistance to working farming families facing financial hardship as a result of a crisis such as illness, bereavement or events beyond anyone's control.

Farm Crisis Network was established in 1995 as a Christian response to the growing need for practical and pastoral support to the farming community. In addition to their helpline, FCN has over 300 volunteers across England & Wales who are ready and able to "walk with" farmers and their families as they seek to resolve their issues, whatever they may be. (Registered charity 1095919)

For further information:

RABI - visit www.rabi.org.uk or contact Nicholas Bond, RABI press officer on 01865 724931 (RABI office); 01789 721311 (home); 07748 927424 (mobile); nick.bond@rabi.org.uk

Farm Crisis Network - visit www.fcn.org.uk or contact Peter Riley, Manor Farm, West Haddon, Northampton, NN6 7AQ on 01788 510866; peter@fcn.org.uk (or mail@fcn.org.uk)