

Conquering mice with 800 m³ per hour

Farmers living in the triangle Bolsward, Sneek and Wommels are massively flooding their fields to prevent a serious mice plague. “Our fields are not supposed to turn black”.

He who looks at the fields close to Tirns sees green, healthy lands. “But all of that is not what it seems”, says Auke-Ids de Boer (22) who, together with brother Wiebe (25) and father Gerben (58), runs a farm with 250 dairy cows and 120 hectares of grass and maize land. He points to the many arid spots and holes in the dehydrated clay soil. All of that due to the work of mice. The next yield of grass will be significantly lower, that is a certainty for the farmer from Tirns.

Last year, especially the south and the middle of the province of Friesland suffered from an extreme mice plague. It looks like the vermin, that easily survived the soft winter and the dry spring, is now manifestating itself in the triangle Bolsward, Sneek and Wommels. Many farmers are trying to prevent a plague by temporarily drowning just harvested grass fields.

Yesterday, De Boer used a water pump for the first time, which he bought together with his friend Harm-Jan Sijbrandij from Hidaard. The machine, which costs € 3.500,-, is able to spew around 800 m³ water through a 100 meter long hose with a diameter of 50 cm. In other words: on a daily base around 3 hectares can be drowned.

How the mice appear so fast is a mystery, but all of a sudden dozens of screeching gulls appear only a minute after De Boer switched on the pump. They massively attack the mice who escaped from the drowned holes of the field. After a certain amount of time fights between the gulls are not necessary anymore. Every see bird can enjoy as much mice as possible. De Boer: “now we hope that the young ones drown and that the old ones will be eaten by the birds”.

The young farmer says that it is a time-consuming, expensive and therefore frustrating activity. He prefers to be busy with his cows: milking, feeding and taking care of them. “And not drowning lands. But we don’t really have a choice. Our fields are not supposed to turn black”. He hopes that mice can be countered with poison. “Just like in Germany”.

As treathening the situation of the grass might be, their maize is doing particulary well. De Boer decided to grow maize under film this year, which was a very good choice due to the cold and dry spring.