

LIVESTOCK+

QMS Sharing best practice from Scottish livestock businesses **SUMMER 2016**

+ Features

IMPROVED GRAZING MANAGEMENT ON
PERTSHIRE FARM BOOSTS PROFITS

BUSINESS PLANNING PAYS
DIVIDENDS FOR INVERNESS FARMER

AYRSHIRE FARMER REDUCES FEED
COSTS BY IMPROVING SILAGE

UPDATES

**A New Year of QMS
Activity Gets Underway**

**Focus on Latest Scotch Beef
Marketing Campaign**

**Pig Industry Supports
Scottish Pig Health Charter**

Inside

Latest news, innovations,
case studies...
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MARKETING FOCUS • GRASS MANAGEMENT • BUSINESS PLANNING • PIG HEALTH • NEWS

ON-LINE VIDEOS PROVING POPULAR

Quality Meat Scotland regularly produces videos to help communicate key messages about the red meat industry to a range of audiences.

From videos promoting Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork, to technical videos on subjects such as calving safety and EID, these short films posted on-line are proving extremely popular. In the past year they have been watched more than **700,000 times**.



The Benefits of EID Recording in Sheep



Tom Kitchin Highlights Value of Scotch Beef PGI



The Importance of Cow Condition Scoring



Celebrating 25 years of Quality Assurance



Meet the Scottish Sheep Farmer of the Year



East Lothian Finisher Discusses SPECC



You can view these videos and many more on the QMS website. Just visit **www.qmscotland.co.uk/video-library**

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter to keep up with the latest news or sign up on our website to receive our weekly free e-newsletter.



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How to contact QMS:

visit www.qmscotland.co.uk

email: info@qmscotland.co.uk

or call us on 0131 472 4040



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WELCOME



Times are tough – there is no doubt about it. Our industry is facing major challenges to profitability and, particularly in recent weeks when we have been flat out with spring work, it can be difficult to keep sight of all that we have to be proud of.

And we do have a great deal to be proud of – our Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands have the quality assurance, traceability and guarantees of welfare that consumers are asking for more and more. Compared with our overseas competitors we can offer many unique selling points such as our sustainability message and our environmental credentials that others can't rival and, with no growth hormones or routine use of prophylactic antibiotics, we are in a very strong position to meet consumer demand on the longer-term global market place.

In the meantime the challenge is to avoid the temptation to talk ourselves and our industry down and focus on the factors affecting profitability which we can control. It's not easy to take time out of a busy day to benchmark our businesses to identify areas where we could improve but there are real rewards to be had in terms of further improvements to efficiency.

That will be the focus of our "Rising to the Challenges" conference on May 17th when delegates will hear about the different areas of the supply chain – from farmer to retailer and processor – as well as a line-up of technical experts. There are no quick, easy wins but, as we hear from those who are operating at the top end of our industry in terms of farm performance, lots of small changes can make a big difference to overall profitability.

I look forward to meeting many of you at the conference and at the forthcoming summer events around the country, including Scotsheep and the Royal Highland Show.+

Jim McLaren, Chairman, Quality Meat Scotland

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Engaging with the industry



At times when the industry's margins are being squeezed hard, the importance of the work which Quality Meat Scotland undertakes comes sharply into focus.

Understandably, the activities we deliver for farmers and others in the Scottish red meat industry also come under more intense scrutiny than ever when profitability is tight and our small team of staff are regularly diverted from delivering activities for the industry to responding to phone-calls from levypayers asking for detailed information about our work.

While this can be time-consuming, and there is the occasional call which is dishearteningly less than constructive, this contact with farmers can offer a healthy opportunity to hear different views and ideas and to talk through the wide-ranging activities we do.

The vast majority of QMS's budget (more than 70%) is spent on promoting the Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork brands and other consumer-facing activities such as education work to communicate the role of red meat in a healthy diet. A comparatively small percentage (under 20%) of our budget goes to industry development work to assist the industry to further improve its efficiency.

At times like this we also get requests to increase our activity and, while we devote considerable effort to securing and administering grant funding for the industry, the reality is that without increased levy income this is very difficult to deliver.

It is extremely important that our levypayers have a good understanding of what we do and we work hard to achieve this – from updating industry representatives; to working with the media and social media activity.

I look forward to meeting many of you at events around the country in the coming weeks – in particular the Royal Highland Show which offers us a unique opportunity to both engage with levypayers and inform and inspire the public about our industry and its fantastic brands.✚

Uel Morton

Uel Morton,
Chief Executive,
Quality Meat Scotland

Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork Star in New Weaning Videos

A series of short videos has been created by QMS to educate Scottish families about the role of red meat in a healthy balanced diet, from highchair to dinner table.

Blogger and Great British Bake Off contestant Holly Bell has created three weaning recipes using Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork, with full servings and finger food options for babies, toddlers and families of four.

Recipe curator and author of Recipes from a Normal Mum, Holly said: "It's great to be working with QMS on this digital campaign to promote good quality food during the weaning stage. As a mum of three myself, I'm constantly trying to create recipes which suit the whole family while providing the boys with all of the nutrients they need."✚

To view the videos visit QMS's Good Family Food Facebook page.

Good family
FOOD



Holly Bell, Blogger
and Great British
Bake Off contestant.

Scottish Consumers Targeted in Latest Scotch Beef Campaign



Over two million Scottish consumers heard what makes Scotch Beef PGI a cut above the rest in a recent QMS radio campaign.

Four adverts aimed at enticing consumers to buy Scotch Beef as a mid-week treat as well as for special occasions such as Easter, ran on commercial radio stations across Scotland in March.

In addition to the radio campaign, "Get Behind The Label" adverts were placed in key newspapers across Scotland, reaching a further one million adults. The adverts featured farmers from across Scotland and aimed to improve consumers' understanding of the quality, welfare and traceability behind the Scotch Beef brand.

This marketing activity in Scotland complemented the main 13 week Scotch Beef campaign "There's beef, there's Scottish beef, then there's Scotch Beef" which ran between February and April and targeted 10 million consumers across Great Britain.

Suzie Carlaw, QMS Marketing Controller, said that initial feedback indicated that the campaign had been very well received.

"The message for this year's campaign was cooking with Scotch Beef can be really simple - it's perfect for mid-week meals as well as special occasions," said Miss Carlaw.✚



Canadians Celebrate Scotch Beef's Arrival

Consumers in Canada are now able to enjoy Scotch Beef PGI, one of Scotland's most iconic foods, for the first time in almost 20 years.

An official showcase dinner was held at The Chefs' House in Toronto in February to celebrate the arrival of Scotch Beef PGI, the first British beef in Canada since 1996.

Jim McLaren, Chairman of QMS spoke at the dinner, which was attended by influential Canadian chefs, retailers and food importers, and said there was a great opportunity for Scotch Beef in Canada.

"Canadian consumers have a genuine appetite for quality, grass-fed, hormone-free Scotch Beef - a product that offers world-leading levels of traceability, assurance and welfare standards," he said.

Scotch Beef PGI joins Scotch Lamb PGI, which became available in Canada in 2015.✚

New Specially Selected Pork Campaign

QMS is launching a new Specially Selected Pork campaign this month to showcase the versatility, affordability and quality associated with the brand, which is underpinned by quality assurance schemes which make animal welfare a priority.

The six week campaign will target an estimated three million consumers across Scotland. It will be supported by online, press and radio advertising as well as promoted in independent butchers shops and members of the Scotch Butchers Club.✚



For more information, please visit: www.speciallyselectedpork.co.uk or the Enjoy Quality Pork Facebook page

QMS GEARS UP FOR THE ROYAL HIGHLAND SHOW

The Royal Highland Show, held this year between 23-26 June, is Scotland's largest event and showcases everything to do with Scottish farming, food and drink and rural living.

QMS has a packed programme of activities on its stand this year, from cookery and butchery demonstrations to interactive health and education activities to showcase all the work, skills and dedication which go into the production of Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork.

The cookery theatre will highlight the versatility of working with these three iconic brands. With the theme 'Quick and Easy Family Food' Lady Claire Macdonald will hold free cookery demonstrations on Thursday and Friday to highlight some healthy and affordable meals that busy parents can quickly rustle up which the whole family will love.



X factor star Emily Middlemas with Scotch Beef mascot Hamish.



Inset: Greenwood Academy pupils - winners of the 2015 QMS 'Design a Burger' competition.



L-R Gavin Colquhoun, Mark Smythe and Declan Small of Elderslie Butchers.

Top Scottish Butchers Scoop Scotch Lamb Innovation Award

Two Scottish butchers who pride themselves on the quality of their meat and their diverse product ranges have won Quality Meat Scotland's Scotch Lamb PGI Innovation Award.

The "Spanish Rack of Scotch Lamb" from John Lawson Butchers based in Uphall, West Lothian and the "Scotch Lamb, Feta and Mint Burger" from The Elderslie Butchers in Elderslie, Renfrewshire, lifted the top honours at the National Sheep Association (NSA) Scotland AGM dinner held in Edinburgh in February.

The awards, which were launched as part of QMS's 2015 Wham Bam Thank You Lamb campaign and are supported by NSA Scotland, aim to showcase quality, innovative Scotch Lamb products and burgers which have been created by Scotch Butchers Club members to meet changing consumer demand. 🌱



John Lawson Sr (left) and John Lawson Jr of John Lawson Butchers



Lady Claire Macdonald.

Former Masterchef the Professionals winner and Chef Jamie Scott will take over the reins at the weekend and continue the theme in his drop in cookery demonstrations throughout Saturday and Sunday.

In addition to the demonstration chefs, there will be a Guinness World Record attempt on the Saturday as well as a series of competitions throughout the four days of the show featuring well-known faces from the farming sector.

Visitors to the stand will also be able to see a line-up of award-winning butchers demonstrate their skills with Stuart McClymont and Gordon King, assessors with the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Associations, providing a lively commentary.

As always, a team of Scotch Beef brand ambassadors will be giving away goodie bags filled with tempting recipes (you'll find more at www.scotchkitchen.com) and there will also be the chance to win the much sought after limited edition Royal Highland Show 2016 Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork t-shirts.

Over in the Discovery Centre, QMS will be working in partnership with the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET) to deliver a Scotch Beef Children's Cookery Theatre. The stand will help promote the role of red meat as part of a healthy balanced diet. Around 1,000 children will have a chance to cook simple, nutritious dishes with beef, pork and lamb over the four days of the show.

As well as leypayers, we also welcome numerous officials, and politicians and representatives from the retail sector to the stand throughout the show to promote the red meat sector and the iconic Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands.+



Masterchef The Professionals winner Jamie Scott.

The stand will help promote the role of red meat as part of a healthy balanced diet. Around 1,000 children will have a chance to cook simple, nutritious dishes with beef, pork and lamb over the four days of the show.



Alistair Paul from Inverness, a member of the Scotch Butchers Club, set a Guinness world record at last year's show.

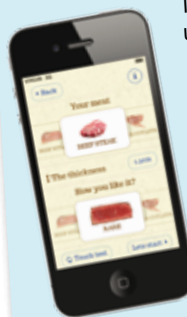
Scottish Pig Producers Back New Pig Health Charter

The Scottish pig industry has highlighted its ongoing commitment to animal health and welfare by supporting the creation of a Scottish Pig Health Charter.

The Charter will further enhance the range of measures already in place to protect, monitor and improve pig health on Scottish farms and add weight to the existing Scottish Pig Health Scheme, run by QMS.+

For further information about the charter visit www.qmscotland.co.uk

Updated "Perfect Steaks and Roast" App now available in six languages



The QMS "Perfect Steaks and Roast" app, has been updated and is now available in French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Swedish and Danish, as well as English. The **FREE** app, which has attracted over 20,000 users in the last year, is available to download from iTunes and Googleplay. It has easy-to-follow instructions, mouthwatering and inspirational recipes and guides to help you choose the perfect cut.+



FREE



Reducing Feed Costs by Improving Silage Quality

Refreshing the farm's silage-making strategy has helped to retain profitability in the Bryson family's 300-head beef finishing enterprise in Ayrshire.



A couple of years ago, when faced with high cereal and protein prices, it became clear that making good quality, consistent silage was vital to keep control of input costs," commented Craig Bryson, who farms with his family at Townhead Farm, Newmills. "We revisited the process and have come up with an approach that is producing highly digestible silage with great D-values."

Townhead is a former dairy extending to 350 acres, with two poultry houses and a tomato-growing enterprise in addition to the finishing cattle. But the family recently moved to growing their own cereals, and they now cut 110 acres of wheat and barley at 30% moisture for crimping. This is reducing reliance on other sources of starch energy in the finishing ration.

The stores are six months to a year old when purchased. Craig selects growthy types and brings home a mix of both native and continental breeds, which are housed in a slatted building with a sloped rubber matted lying area, adapted from the old cubicle shed. The silage-based

ration includes the home-grown crimped grains, minerals, distiller's dark grains and half a kilo of straw per head, all delivered through a Total Mixed Rotation (TMR) feeder.

The suggested tweaks to improve quality, spanned the whole silage making process. The Brysons were advised to balance yield with quality as a lighter yield of leafy, highly digestible grass is most desirable, so it was proposed to aim for three lighter cuts rather than two heavier crops of stemmy grass producing forage of lower digestibility.

Getting the grass off to a good start is, therefore, imperative and this is achieved at Townhead with the application of slurry and hen pen from their poultry enterprise. Precision spreading of two tonnes per acre of hen pen plus a covering of slurry in March is the goal. Having recently upgraded storage, the Brysons are making better use of slurry to reduce fertiliser costs.

"We currently aim for silage with a high D-value and ideally a Metabolic Energy (ME) of 11.0 or greater; with crude protein higher than 14%, so I prefer to cut when less than 25% of the grass has seeded.



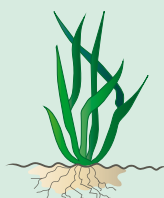
Before I get the mower hitched on, I am on the lookout for good, dry weather and a break in the rain that comes regularly through the Irvine Valley,” said Craig.

He added: “It’s important that we plan to make the best silage possible, because if the weather does turn wet, the quality will be diminished but not completely wiped out. D-values will diminish by half a unit per day once the plant starts to push up flowering stems, so a few days of rain that delay cutting can significantly reduce quality.”

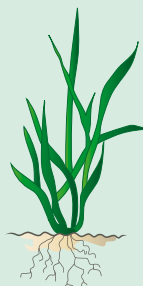
The good results at Townhead can also be attributed to the silage-making process itself, with a tedder being used to scatter grass pre-lifting. Craig said: “Once scattered, the silage wilts more quickly, allowing us to achieve 25% dry matter and reduce effluent. The silage is usually heading for the pit 24–30 hours after it is cut.”

Under the new regime, two forage wagons come in from a local contractor with the result that silage making is now much more flexible and less hectic. The contractor charges per hour rather than per acre, making the new process affordable for three lighter cuts.

Digestibility of grass silage in relation to stage of growth.



72 D-value, leafy growth.
Typical first cut yield of a long term ley – 4.6t DM/ha



68 D-value, lengthening of stems.
Typical first cut yield of a long term ley – 6.1t DM/ha



65 D-value, flower heads emerging.
Typical first cut yield of a long term ley – 7.5t DM/ha

D-value will fall by around half a unit per day once grass starts to provide flowering stems

Both parties agree this is fair, and with no need for extra trailers and drivers there is a substantial saving in diesel costs, too. Crucially, though, the wagons’ longer chop length seems to suit the young, leafy grass and Craig sees quite a difference in the finished ration.

“The heap along the feed passage is much lighter and more digestible for the cattle. We like the young stores to hit the ground running, and this silage is now so appealing to them that intakes have improved. We supply Stoddart’s at Ayr with five finished cattle every week, so we rely on our cattle to perform on the diet. They kill out well between 280kg and 350kgs, and achieve an occasional U but mainly R4L grades.”

There is little doubt that the changes to the Townhead system have delivered positive results and big savings. Robert Gilchrist, Knowledge Transfer Specialist with QMS, commented: “Farmers aiming for cattle growth rates of 1kg liveweight per day could save 12 pence per animal per day on feed costs by improving the quality of their silage. This may not sound a lot, but for the 300 cattle at Townhead over a 200-day winter it’s a £7,200 saving.”

He was keen to point out that suckler herds can benefit from adopting the same approach. He said: “High-quality silage can be supplemented with straw to preserve more of the winter reserves for young stock – good quality silage is rocket fuel for growing cattle. Alternatively, a first cut can be taken to feed the young stock and then left to bulk out for a stemmier second cut to feed the cows.”



Comparable diets for growing cattle at 1kg a day

	Diet 1 (using high quality silage) 11.0 ME silage, 14% crude protein		Diet 2 (using poor quality silage) 10.2 ME silage, 11% crude protein	
	Weight (kg)	Daily Cost (£)	Weight (kg)	Daily Cost (£)
Barley	0	0	1.5	£0.15
Dark Grains	1	£0.18	1.75	£0.32
Silage	27	£0.60	20	£0.43
Total	28	£0.78	23.25	£0.90

“Farmers aiming for cattle growth rates of 1kg liveweight per day could save 12 pence per animal per day on feed costs by improving the quality of their silage”.

A NEW YEAR OF QMS ACTIVITY GETS UNDERWAY

April saw the start of the new financial year for Quality Meat Scotland and, following a period of planning involving the staff and board members, it also marked the launch of a new year of QMS activities to support the Scottish red meat industry.



Here Jim McLaren, Chairman of QMS, highlights some of the organisation's priorities for the year ahead. QMS focuses on the communication of its activity plan to ensure that the media, key stakeholders and levypayers are fully up to speed with what will be delivered for the industry.

REMIND US OF THE RANGE OF WORK THAT QMS UNDERTAKES

JM: QMS has a small team of staff who are committed to delivering a very diverse programme of activity for the Scottish red meat industry.

By far the biggest area of budget spend (over 70%) goes on consumer-facing activities behind the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands at home and abroad. Our industry development work focuses on grassroots activities aimed at improving the efficiency, sustainability and profitability of the Scottish red meat industry. QMS also runs six quality assurance schemes which underpin Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork.

Our Economics Services team ensures businesses involved in the Scottish red meat production chain benefit from the latest industry statistics and provides expert analysis whilst the communications and health and education team help ensure that QMS continues to engage with its target audiences and improves people's understanding of the importance of eating red meat as part of a healthy balanced diet.

BRIEFLY, WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING PROCESS BEHIND THE ACTIVITIES QMS UNDERTAKES?

JM: QMS undertakes a thorough planning process which includes scoping out the activities we will undertake in each financial year to meet our industry's objectives. Our topline strategy is 'shaping a sustainable and prospering Scottish red meat industry' and the planning process sees QMS staff and board working together to share ideas. The delivery of the agreed programme of activity is then monitored throughout the year and reported on at each board meeting.

ARE FARMING OR OTHER INDUSTRY REPRESENTATIVES INVOLVED IN THE PLANNING BEHIND QMS ACTIVITIES?

JM: Input from those who work in the different sectors of the industry is very valuable and crucial to ensuring we are targeting our resources in the best way to deliver strong results and value for money for levypayers. Farmers and representatives from other parts of the Scottish red meat industry play a central role in the planning process behind all our activities. As well as our board, QMS has around 15 committees with industry representation including the cattle, sheep and pig industry groups and the butchers and brands marketing groups, along with the standard setting bodies for our six assurance schemes.

WHAT DO YOU VIEW AS THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR THE SCOTTISH RED MEAT INDUSTRY?

JM: The main challenge faced by the Scottish red meat industry is without doubt profitability. Factors linked to supply and demand, cheaper imports, CAP reform, exchange rate, wider market access, input costs and the weather (to name but a few) are putting pressure on producers. Yet all of the above mentioned pressures are largely outwith farmers' control.

The profitability equation is a complex beast, but the pence per kilo aspect is in reality just one of a wide range of variables - though undoubtedly it is the one over which we have least control and greatest frustration.

Surely as farmers we should be concentrating on the areas over which we do have control, such as making sure our end product is exactly what our customer is looking for in terms of carcass weight and grade, striving to improve our herd health status still further and making the most efficient use possible of grass, our industry's greatest natural resource.



WHAT OPPORTUNITY DOES THE DELIVERY OF THE BEEF 2020 GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS OFFER THE INDUSTRY?

JM: The Beef 2020 report was wide-ranging, not only in terms of the composition of the 2020 Group which enjoyed representation from all sectors of our Scottish beef sector, but also in the breadth of its recommendations which covered 23 proposals from the market place through to animal health.

A Beef 2020 delivery group is now meeting regularly to oversee the implementation of the proposals. The development of an integrated and accessible database was a central recommendation and is seen as key to the delivery of improved productivity, allowing producers to track the performance of their animals through the whole of their lives and beyond. This information will help farmers to make changes to their businesses based on sound knowledge about the effect these changes are likely to have on profitability. The Scottish Government's new Beef Efficiency Scheme (or BES) is the central mechanism for populating this database and I would encourage all producers of suckled calves to join this scheme.

Scotland's landscape and climate make for a challenging environment to produce food, yet these very attributes are what makes Scotland such a great place to produce livestock.

AND WHAT ARE THE MAIN WIDER OPPORTUNITIES YOU SEE FOR THE INDUSTRY?

JM: Scotland's landscape and climate make for a challenging environment to produce food, yet these very attributes are what makes Scotland such a great place to produce livestock. As the demand for high quality protein continues to grow while the focus of consumers and governments alike turns more and more towards sustainability of production, Scotland's livestock producers are perfectly placed to deliver on all fronts.

I believe that UK consumers have lost sight of the inherent quality of our fantastic products and are taking them somewhat for granted. Just as "Prophets are not recognised in their hometown" it is only when we have the opportunity to see what is on offer in other countries that we can truly appreciate the uniquely high quality of our Scotch PGI brands and our Specially Selected Pork.

On a recent trip to Canada I quickly realised that I needed to reset not only my watch but my entire perspective on what North American consumers perceive as a normal red meat offering.

What we offer from Scotland could not be more different - a product which is free of growth hormones, does not involve routine use of prophylactic antibiotics and has production methods which are grass-based with whole of life quality assurance schemes and full traceability.

Every one of these attributes would add significant value in many key overseas markets, yet they are unique selling points taken for granted in our home market.✚

It is time to re-set the clock.

**There's beef.
There's Scottish beef.
Then there's Scotch Beef**

See for yourself, Scotch Beef PGI really does tick all the boxes.

	GENERIC BEEF	GENERIC SCOTTISH BEEF	SCOTCH BEEF PGI
Guaranteed to be born and reared its whole life in Scotland		✓	✓
Guaranteed to be produced in Scotland		✓	✓
Guarantee of prime animals			✓
Guarantee of breed type			✓
Guarantee of whole of life farm assurance consisting of independent regular inspections by QMS quality assurance assessors including: - High quality animal feed - High animal welfare standards - Well run farms			✓

www.scotchkitchen.com

BENEFITING FROM BUSINESS PLANNING

Forward planning is a crucial part of any successful business, but it is not always easy for farmers to predict important factors which may affect their businesses, such as market trends and weather. To assist farmers with the planning process, QMS held a series of workshops across Scotland in February.



QMS plans to hold more regional business planning events and workshops later this year. Check local press and the QMS events page for further details.

The business planning workshops were an opportunity for farmers to set aside a bit of time to look at how they might mitigate the impact of Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) reductions, boost margins and determine future farm policy," said Douglas Bell, Head of Industry Development with QMS. They were well attended, and we are confident that many farmers left the workshops with a clearer idea of how to make better decisions enabling them to improve their farms' performance and profitability."

One farmer who attended the Inverness workshop and found it very worthwhile was Alasdair Macnab from Kildun, Dingwall. He said: "The workshop helped me understand the finer details and relevance of analysis of accounts and the correlation of cash flow and accounting in modern farm businesses."

Alasdair and his wife, Gill, farm 152 acres next to the River Conon and Cromarty Firth, where they grow spring barley and keep a herd of 110 cattle. The herd includes 22 pedigree Limousins under the Alagils prefix and 23 Limousin cross suckler cows.

The pedigree cattle have had numerous successes in the show and sale ring, but the cross cows are also an important part of the business and Alasdair said: "We retain commercial cows for three reasons: firstly, so we can take advantage of selling at the local Dingwall market; secondly, so that we can keep in touch with commercial trends through producing and selling stores; and lastly to have a source of home-bred cows and heifers as recipients for Limousin embryos."

Alasdair, a former government vet, maintains a high health status in the herd, which is completely closed with the only purchases being semen and embryos. However, health is not the only aspect of the business to which Alasdair and Gill pay special attention. They know to the last penny how much it costs to rear an animal to one year, two years and to the point of calving.

The driving force behind costing and analysing everything stemmed from servicing the loan which helped them buy the farm from Alasdair's parents in 2005, and from farming with very limited support payments. Alasdair said: "As new entrants, we knew we had to pay attention to detail, adopt new practices and technology, maximise our output per acre and keep costs under control in order to make the business successful."

"As new entrants, we knew we had to pay attention to detail, adopt new practices and technology, maximise our output per acre and keep costs under control in order to make the business successful."

With around 22 acres of the farm down to woodland and ponds and the remainder heavy clay soil, the Macnabs have had to invest heavily in buildings for their cows. However, a variety of management tools have allowed them to keep the cost per cow per year at £580, well below the national average.

Alasdair said: "The herd calves in the autumn, which means we can stock cows and calves heavily in the summer and we have pedigree bulls to sell in the spring. The growing cattle go to grass in the spring and are sold at ten months old in Dingwall. Last year, the steers averaged £1,050 and the heifers £940."

Housed cattle are fed straw, draff and minerals, with the cows getting some barley. Growing cattle and bulls also receive compound feed. Little silage is made and Alasdair said: "We only feed silage for three weeks before turnout to help the animals' transition to grass.

This year we are not growing silage, as it is now more economical to buy it in." Alasdair uses technology extensively to help improve his business, such as GPS soil mapping to optimise both grass and malting barley production, and EBVs to produce bulls which are readily sold both privately and at Carlisle and Stirling. One result of focusing on what the market wants is that the increased basic payment, to which he is now entitled, can be used to build his assets instead of shoring up the basic business.

No strangers to business planning, the Macnabs have been through two whole-farm reviews, which they found incredibly useful; however, Alasdair said that there is always more to be learned, and in his opinion the QMS workshops were a brilliant starting point for the industry to move forward.

He said: "We have learned so much from speakers prepared to transfer their skills, and I believe these lessons could put people on the road to saving their businesses by forward planning instead of learning from bitter experience."

Following the recent QMS business planning workshop, Alasdair and Gill plan to continue to make better use of benchmarking in their own business. They have also reviewed their current five-year business plan following the recent course and have a clear focus on what they want at the end of it. ➤



KILDUN FARM, DINGWALL : AT A GLANCE

Farmed by
Alasdair Macnab
in partnership with
wife, **Gill**.

Cost per
cow:
£580
a year

Steers
averaged
£1,050 and
the heifers
£940

110
cattle herd,
includes **22**
pedigree
Limousins

BOOSTING PERFORMANCE AND PROFITS

This summer sees the start of the third grazing season of the popular QMS Grazing Group project. For many farmers being involved in the grazing groups has been a catalyst to change their farm business models dramatically.

“**T**here is no doubt the grazing group experience has put us on the right road to building a viable business in what is just now an uncertain farming industry,” said Alex Brewster, host of QMS’s Perthshire Grazing Group.

Alex, who farms with his parents at Rotmell near Dunkeld, runs 800 Blackface ewes and 100 commercial Aberdeen Angus cows on 986ha. The farm is all less favoured area (LFA), with around 140 hectares of improved pasture, 200 hectares of rough grazing and the rest hill.

One of the important messages to come out of the last two years of the grazing group project is the importance of looking after the soil and pasture. Alex said: “There are so many things in farming that we cannot control such as the weather and government policies.



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However, if we can manage the soil to get an extra six weeks of grass growth/utilisation, we can reduce our wintering costs by 25%, giving us more control back in our businesses.”

One of the changes the Brewsters have made since the grazing group project began is to run all 65 spring-calving cows and heifers in one batch, with two bulls, for six weeks. The motivation behind this was to improve grass utilisation, and Alex plans to have a large group of cattle to follow the ewes and twins in the grazing rotation.

Alex had dabbled with rotational grazing before he took part in the grazing group, and he is now building a permanent system of 3ha paddocks to be grazed throughout the spring and summer. He said: “The idea is that we are using stock to manage the grass while increasing production at the same time. We graze the grass between 2,500 and 1,500kg/ha dry matter (DM). If it gets to more than 2,700kg/ha DM then it needs to be kept for silage as it has lost its grazing potential.





“The ewes with twins are a priority in the summer and they get first shot at the grass for 24 hours, eating the best of the leaf and clover. Then the cows and calves come in and clean up for 24 hours before the field is left for 21 days until grass growth is 8 to 10 cm or 2,500kg/ha DM again.”

Last year he achieved average growth rates on the lambs of 250g/day from birth to weaning, and the average weaning weight of 30kg at just under 100 days was up 15%. Target growth rates for the spring-born calves during the first summer are 1.25kg per day, while those having their second summer at grass are expected to gain at least 1.5kg per day.

Alex is finding the autumn herd expensive and plans to change to 100% spring calving over the next couple of years. Calves will be sold at 18 months old, either finished or store. The key, he believes, is to be flexible and take advantage of the best markets available at the optimum selling time for the calves.

He is focused on recording his cattle for desirable traits and discovered that the biggest cows seldom produce the calves with the highest growth rates. Alex is now working towards keeping cows with an average mature weight of 600kg which hold to their first service and produce a calf which can gain at least 1.25kg per day.

He said: “I am trying to breed for consistency and reliability, and also for an animal which can cope with the climate.”

Another area that Alex is working on, with the encouragement of the Perthshire Grazing Group, is minimising winter feed for both cattle and sheep. Cows are weaned at 160 days in good condition, which means they should manage most of the winter without feeding concentrate. Alex would rather utilise the grass by grazing than by cutting silage, which is costly and has knock-on effects on the soil such as compaction, so his plan this year is to cut some surplus grass but then make a decision on whether to cut again depending on what is in store and the number of mouths he has to feed.

“I am trying to breed for consistency and reliability, and also for an animal which can cope with the climate.”

This year Alex sold all lambs either finished or store by December 1st. This allowed the grass to rest for 120 days and grow to around 2,000kg DM/ha by the end of March. This means that the ewes only need to maintain condition prior to lambing on April 25th.

During a trip to New Zealand in January, Alex was impressed with the flexible business models there, where people are willing to embrace change and adapt their systems depending on seasonal growth, livestock numbers and environmental conditions.

Alex’s Nuffield Scholarship project entitled “Powered Pasture - the point of balance” will investigate how far pasture systems can be pushed before profitability starts to decline. He said: “Being part of the QMS grazing group project encouraged me to apply for the Nuffield scheme. The group has had some really interesting speakers and I have had so many ‘light bulb’ moments over the last three years.”✚

Sign up to the New Health Charter

The Scottish pig industry is highlighting its ongoing commitment to animal health and welfare by supporting the creation of a Scottish Pig Health Charter.

The level of support for the creation of the new Charter was evident at the QMS pig conference held at Kingennie in Dundee at the end of 2015, when the Scottish pig producers attending were 100% united in their commitment to support it.

Allan Ward, Pig Specialist with QMS, commented: "The Charter will enable rapid response through the Scottish Pig Disease Control Centre (SPDCC) to diseases such as PEDv, in order to control and limit the spread. It will also establish the health profiles of units in different areas and geographically map the regional distribution of diseases."



Allan Ward, Pig Specialist at QMS.

He added: "The Charter is part of the Scottish Pig Health Scheme that will enable the industry to further improve pig health and productivity, and we hope that all our commercial Scottish pig producers will sign up to it."

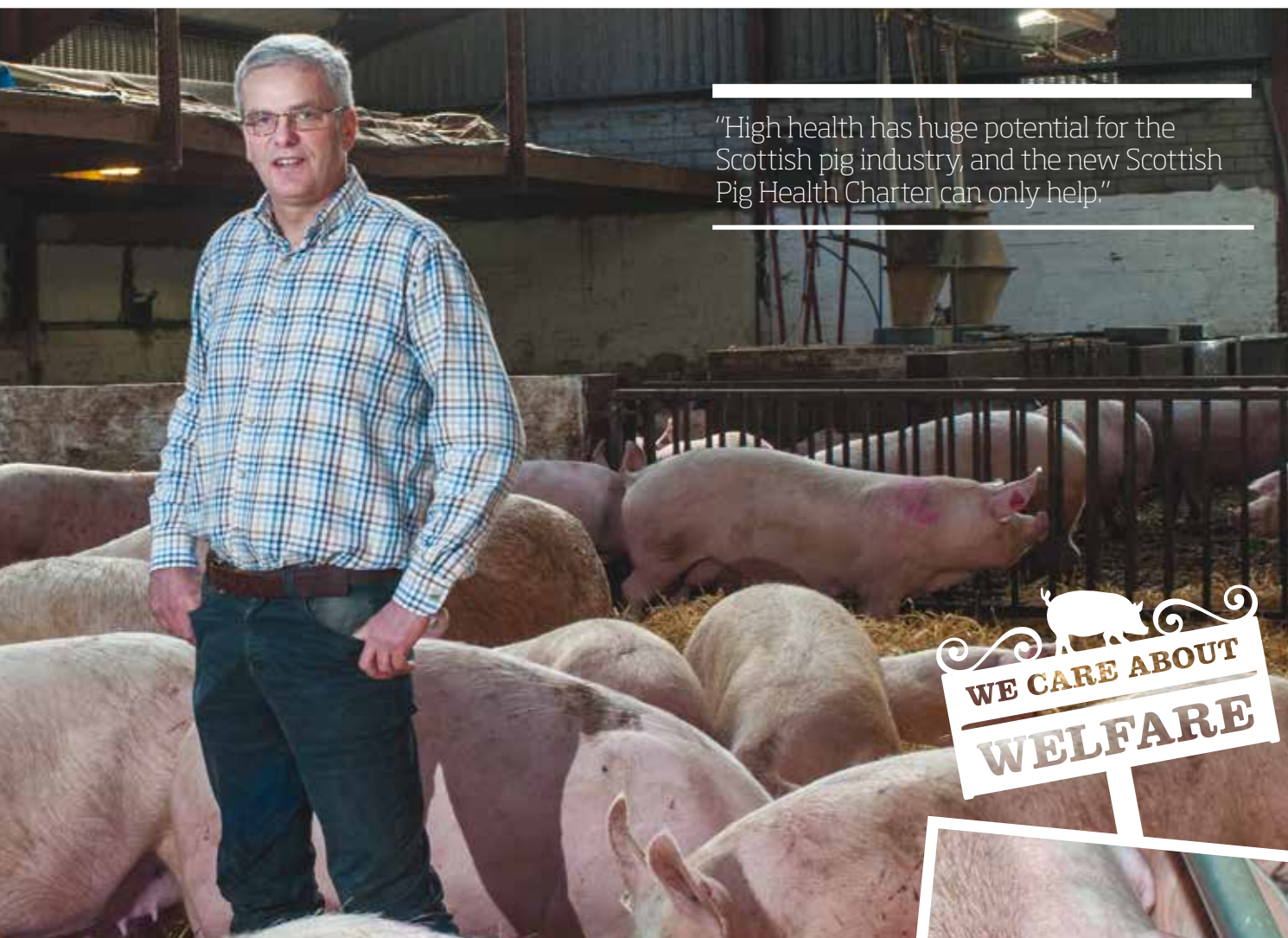
One producer who is very supportive of the new Charter is Roderic Bruce, who farms 750 acres and has a 360-sow unit at Logierieve, near Ellon, in Aberdeenshire. His Large White cross Landrace sows produce pigs both for finishing and for replacements in the unit. He said: "We rear 30 pigs per sow per year and retain 150 gilts for the breeding unit while the rest are sold through Quality Pork Limited (QPL) at Brechin." Roderic also grows winter wheat, spring and winter barley, and oilseed rape on the farm, which are all - to some extent - included in the pig rations.

Roderic is chairman of QPL, which is a collaborative business between Scottish pig farmers through Scotlean and Scottish Pig Producers and Tulip UK Ltd. They took over the Brechin site from AP Jess in 2014, and, with the help of a £2.7 million Food Processing Marketing Co-operation (FPMC) grant from the Scottish government, have invested a total of £10 million to significantly upgrade existing facilities.

According to Roderic, the plant is performing well, but the problem at the moment is that supply is outstripping demand and the price has dropped to 113p/kg, which, he said, is perilously close to the cost of production. Roderic pointed out that Scotland has an advantage over other countries because the pig producers have a wider geographical spread and lower stocking density, which gives them the opportunity to have healthier herds. Like several other producers, he did a partial de-population last year, which has given his finishing unit a massive boost, reducing costs and allowing him to survive the recent dip in prices.

The partial "de-pop", as it is known, involved taking all the growing pigs off site and cleaning and resting the buildings before populating them with the next lot of growing pigs.





"High health has huge potential for the Scottish pig industry, and the new Scottish Pig Health Charter can only help."



Roderic said: "I was delighted to eliminate Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PPRS) and enzootic pneumonia, but the real difference has been on the production side. The feed conversion ratio has improved from 2.5 kg of feed per kg of liveweight gain to 2.3 kg, which makes the unit more efficient."

The knock-on effect of this is that the pigs in the finishing unit are approaching 1kg/day liveweight gain, which means they reach their finished weight of 115kg or 85kg deadweight three weeks earlier than before the partial de-pop. The use of antibiotics is now minimal on the unit.

Roderic is delighted with the result of the partial de-pop in his herd and said: "High health has huge potential for the Scottish pig industry, and the new Scottish Pig Health Charter can only help."

He explained that health monitoring has been taking place for the last ten years at the abattoir through the Wholesome Pigs Scheme, but the Charter will allow producers to map their health status and make it available to all Scottish Pig Health Charter members. This will mean that everyone is aware of potential health problems and will enable producers to make decisions on possible health improvements. Roderic said: "To improve the health of Scottish pig herds effectively, we need every producer to sign up to this Charter."+



LOGIERIEVE SOW UNIT: AT A GLANCE

Run by
Roderic Bruce
at Logierieve, near
Ellon,
Aberdeenshire

Roderic
farms
750
acres

360
sow unit

Rears
30 pigs
per sow, per year

BEHIND THE 2016 SCOTCH BEEF PGI MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Consumer-facing work, including the marketing and promotion of Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands, is by far the biggest piece of activity QMS undertakes.

The QMS marketing team has a history of delivering strong campaigns to target key consumers. These campaigns can't be efficient without clear targeting of consumers (those who eat, or could eat the product), shoppers (those who buy, or could buy the product) and retailers (those who present the products to shoppers).

The most recent campaign to be delivered in Great Britain was the £750,000-plus Scotch Beef PGI campaign, featuring an eye-catching creative with the strapline: "There's beef, there's Scottish beef and then there's Scotch Beef."

The campaign was partly funded by a two year European Commission grant, which QMS was successful in securing in 2015 to support activities to promote Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI in Great Britain as well as in Denmark, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. The fact that Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI hold Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status is key to securing this European funding.



WHAT IS PGI?

PGI stands for Protected Geographical Indication. It's an EU scheme to protect and promote traditional and regional food products of higher quality which are unique to a geographic area. Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb have held this coveted PGI status since 1996. Other products that have PGI status are Melton Mowbray pies, Plymouth gin and Parma ham.

As part of the planning process, QMS works closely with the members of the Scotch Beef Marketing Strategy Group, which includes industry representatives - such as farmers and processors. QMS also works with the Scottish Butchers Think Tank – a group of progressive butchers who are keen to find ways to promote the Scotch Beef brand. The group members give very valuable guidance and make suggestions on areas such as the timings of campaigns.

“The 2016 Scotch Beef campaign kicked off at the beginning of February and ran until the end of April. The aim of the campaign was to boost markets after the January spending dip while taking in some key dates such as Valentine’s Day, Mother’s Day and Easter,” explained Suzie Carlaw, QMS Marketing Controller.

The success of QMS marketing activities has paid huge dividends, with Scotch Beef PGI - recently named Scotland’s favourite food – enjoying brand awareness of 93% north of the border. Accordingly, spring campaigns in recent years have focused on increasing brand awareness in the south, where awareness is around 49%.

This spring’s Scotch Beef campaign was aimed at specific target consumer groups. All the groups are able (and willing) to pay more for premium beef. They are very discerning consumers and very selective about who they listen to, and look for guarantees of quality when buying red meat.

What the target consumer groups for Scotch Beef PGI all have in common is that they own their own home and live, or used to live, in a city, and have a household income of over £75,000 a year.

Most importantly for QMS, research has shown that these groups of individuals have an interest in the provenance of their food and a desire to purchase the best quality – complete with welfare and traceability guarantees.

Rail and tube stations in the Greater London area were also targeted with digital billboard advertising at the key evening rush hours, when commuters are known to shop for their evening meal.

High-end magazines and quality Sunday newspaper supplements were also targeted for the press campaign, and accounted for 24% of the overall budget.

Around 11% was reserved for online advertising, focusing on sites that are regularly visited by demographic groups ABC1: 30–60 year-olds, who have university degrees, are married and have children. These groups have been identified as target consumer groups for Scotch Beef PGI.

What the target consumer groups for Scotch Beef PGI all have in common is that they own their own home and live, or used to live, in a city and have a household income of over £75,000 a year.

In addition, a four-week radio campaign on Scottish commercial stations ran in March. Point-of-sale material, including recipes, was supplied to 280 butchers shops who are members of the Scotch Butchers Club, while the team worked closely with all the major multiple retailers to encourage them to use promotional posters and leaflets.

Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb are also promoted throughout the year on Twitter and Facebook as well as through the Scotch Kitchen website. A new Facebook page for Specially Selected Pork has recently been launched and there is an email database of 45,000 people who have actively signed up for information, and receive monthly emails on how to select, cook and enjoy the brands.

Similar campaigns will be carried out by the QMS marketing team for Specially Selected Pork in the early summer and for Scotch Lamb PGI in the late summer and autumn, when lamb supply is at its peak.+

SCOTCH VS SCOTTISH

Scotch Beef PGI is beef from cattle sourced from QMS assurance scheme approved Scottish farms. It has the guarantee of whole life assurance. If meat is billed simply as **Scottish beef**, it can be from any cattle born, reared and processed in Scotland, irrespective of any assurance guarantees. It holds no PGI status.

IMPORTANCE OF MARKET RESEARCH

Conscious of a limited budget and the need to spend wisely to achieve the best results, the QMS marketing team analyses research carefully before placing adverts.

A range of information is used from the following organisations: Kantar, a company which researches retailing trends; IGD, a charity monitoring shoppers attitudes; and Carat, a media buying agency. This allows QMS to reach its target consumers in the most cost effective way, ensuring that it only advertises where and when advertising offers the best returns and value for money.

All the adverts used in QMS marketing campaigns are researched extensively with the target consumer groups prior to launch, to make sure the visuals evoke a positive reaction and encourage consumers to buy this brand in the future. The steaks used in Scotch Beef adverts are usually cooked medium-rare, which is the most accepted way of cooking for the target market for Scotch Beef PGI.

Consumer behaviour is constantly changing and marketing campaigns need to reflect this. An example of this is the recent trend for people to look up recipes online rather than using cookery books.

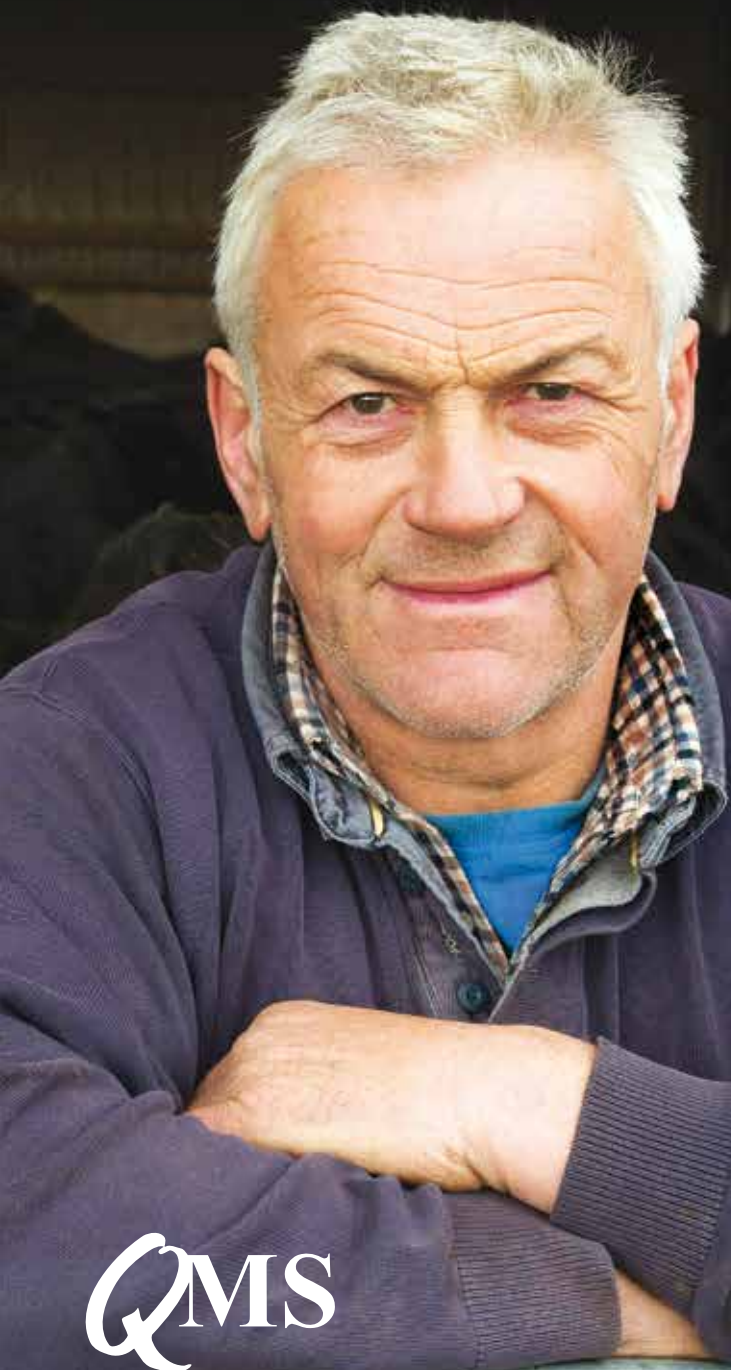
Online searches for recipes and mealtime inspiration peak at 5pm on a workday and 11am on a Sunday, so Scotch Beef adverts in this years campaign were targeted towards the appropriate demographic groups at those times.

For further information about Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork, including cooking guides and recipe ideas, visit: www.scotchkitchen.com and www.speciallyselectedpork.co.uk



“Being Quality Assured is vital for my business”

David Houstoun, Glenkilrie Farm, Glenshee



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