

# LIVESTOCK+

QMS Sharing best practice from Scottish livestock businesses WINTER 2016/17

## + Updates

LANARKSHIRE FARMER HIGHLIGHTS  
SPECC BENEFITS

HIGHLIGHTS OF SCOTCH LAMB  
MARKETING CAMPAIGN

QMS MEETINGS INSPIRE BIG  
CHANGES ON BUTE FARM

## FEATURES

**Borders Farm Triplet Performance  
Soars With Plantain Boost**

**Reducing Winter Feed Bill  
Through Quality Forage Crops**

**Aberdeenshire Pig Farmer's  
Homecure Success**

*Inside*

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case studies...  
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FORAGE QUALITY • GRAZING GROUPS • BULL MANAGEMENT • SPECC • SCOTCH LAMB CAMPAIGN



# ONLINE 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 online are proving extremely popular. The six videos below have attracted over **100,000** views over the last two months alone.



Lorraine Kelly Enjoys Debut Shepherding Experience



Jean-Christophe Novelli Praises Scotch Lamb PGI



The Importance of Cow Condition Scoring



EBVs - the benefits of strong maternal traits



EBVs - the benefits of strong terminal traits



Stockmanship and EBVs - their role in tup selection



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



## LIVESTOCK+

### How to contact QMS:

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# WELCOME

“During the coming weeks I am looking forward to meeting the finalist farmers in the 2016 Scotch Beef Farm of the Year award, which QMS runs in partnership with AgriScot.

Both the Watson family in Banchory, the current winners of the award, and the team at Armadale in Sutherland, winners of the Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year, have thoroughly embraced the PR opportunities which have emerged over the past year.

On the QMS stand at the Royal Highland Show, representatives from both farms spoke to the public about cattle and sheep farming, and both have hosted visits from film crews, radio presenters and journalists. A recent trip saw us taking a high-profile chef to cook Scotch Lamb on the glorious hillside at Armadale – an experience the chef will never forget!

It is vital that our industry doesn't miss these opportunities, and we greatly appreciate the time which farmers give to assist us with PR opportunities to support the Scottish red meat industry.

We are all busy, especially at this time of year, so particular thanks go to the farmers who have made time to don aprons to help us promote Scotch Lamb at retailers as part of our on-going Wham Bam Lamb campaign and to host visits by food writers, chefs and even TV presenter Lorraine Kelly!

Every farmer has the potential to be a valuable ambassador for the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands, and to support our marketing and promotional campaigns.

It is great to see farmers such as Joyce Campbell of Armadale sharing her love of Scotch Lamb on Facebook and Twitter as well as re-tweeting and sharing every Scotch Lamb recipe that QMS posts.

The potential benefit, if every farmer across the land were to be an ambassador for their brand, is immense!+

**Jim McLaren**, Chairman, Quality Meat Scotland

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## Chief Executive Report



In recent weeks, much of QMS's consumer-facing focus has been on the marketing campaign behind Scotch Lamb PGI, and this is on target to inspire over three million people about how simple, quick and tasty lamb is.

However, we have also been working hard on a range of activities for the Scottish red meat industry, one of which is the new monitor farm programme.

Nine new monitor farms are being established across Scotland – from the Scottish borders to Shetland. The programme is being run jointly by QMS and AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds and funded by £1.25million secured from the Scottish Government and European Union's Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund.

The aim is to establish farms, typical of their area, as monitor farms to help improve the profitability, productivity and sustainability of producers through practical demonstrations, the sharing of best practice and the discussion of current issues.

Importantly, the programme will adopt a whole-farm approach and will work to build resilient businesses, introduce innovative ideas and highlight the importance of collaboration.

The success of the programme is hugely dependent on the enthusiasm and

commitment of the people involved in its delivery – from the host families to the management and community groups and the facilitators.

It is also vital that the messages from the monitor farm programme are shared as widely as possible, and we are looking forward to developing a strong social media presence for each farm as part of this.

Two years ago, QMS undertook a farmer survey seeking feedback on how producers would most like to receive information. TV/video was identified as one preferred route, and we have been steadily growing the number of farmer-facing videos we produce.

Typically, each of our industry-facing videos are viewed around 25,000 times and we look forward to continuing to build on this.+

*Uel Morton*

**Uel Morton,**  
Chief Executive,  
Quality Meat Scotland

## Scotch Lamb and Swirling Kilts to Support Children's Charity

TV presenter Lorraine Kelly visited a farm near Forfar during a day spent with QMS learning about Scotch Lamb, as part of the Kilt2Work initiative in support of the STV Children's Appeal.



The Scotch Lamb Kilt2Work fund-raiser saw butchers and farmers around the country don their kilts at work. Several also joined Lorraine and the Scotch Lamb mascot for the Edinburgh KiltWalk.

Lorraine pulled on some very glamorous tartan wellies to visit Southtown of Melgund Farm, near Forfar, where she joined farmer Billy Jackson to help round up a field of ewes and lambs.

Lorraine also visited Scott Brothers in Broughty Ferry, a member of QMS's Scotch Butchers Club, where she spent time with

staff and chatted with customers to thank them for their support.

"It's been great to meet some of the farmers and butchers who are supporting the STV Appeal. The reaction of customers being served by dashing, kilted butchers was great fun to see and my thanks go to all the butchers throughout Scotland taking part," said Lorraine.

"It's also been brilliant to spend time with a farming family and see the pride they take in producing quality-assured Scotch Lamb and looking after the land they farm."

Representatives from the farming and butcher community were invited to appear on the STV Appeal programme when it was broadcast live on Friday 23 September.

"This was a great opportunity to raise the profile of the valuable role of Scottish butchers and farmers in their communities, and the profile of the Scotch Lamb brand, as well as raising money for a brilliant charity which is close to everyone's hearts," said Carol McLaren, Head of Communications with QMS.+

Images: Lorraine Kelly with members of the team from Scott Brothers Butchers in Broughty Ferry (top) and on farm with members of the Jackson family (left).





## Scotch Lamb PGI on the Menu for Top Foodie Writers



Some of the UK's top food writers with sheep farmers Bobby and Anne Lennox at Shantron, Luss.

### QMS hosted a visit to Glasgow by members of the Guild of Food Writers recently to learn about Scotch Lamb PGI.

The trip, supported by QMS as part of the 2016 Scotch Lamb campaign, took the team of foodie fanatics on a farm visit to Anne and Bobby Lennox's Shantron Farm in Luss, to learn more about the passion and dedication of farmers who produce Scotch Lamb.

They then headed to leading restaurant The Sisters in Kelvingrove for the opportunity to sample delicious Scotch Lamb PGI and to learn more about the quality assurance levels, traceability and animal welfare standards which underpin the iconic brand.

Laurent Vernet, Head of Marketing at QMS, who joined the food writers, said: "We are justifiably proud of the Scotch Lamb we produce in Scotland, and hope the trip helped to inspire some of the UK's leading food writers about what a fantastic, versatile meat it is."+

November

16

### DATE FOR YOUR DIARY – AGRISCOT

As well as having our usual stand at AgriScot on November 16th, QMS is proud to support the Beef Demonstration at this year's event. The demonstration will be held in the main ring at 11.30am and will focus on improving profits for all.

A Guide to  
Bull Selection  
and Management



## Producers Urged to Make Most of New Bull Selection Guide

QMS has produced a new publication "A Guide to Bull Selection and Management" to assist farmers when investing in a new bull.+

To request a copy phone QMS on 0131 472 4040. It is also available to download from the QMS website [www.qmscotland.co.uk/publications](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/publications).

## Sixty-second Scotch Lamb Recipes Launched!



QMS has developed a new series of fun, quick-step recipe videos to show busy consumers how to rustle up simple, nutritious meals.

The latest series of 60-second videos all feature Scotch Lamb PGI in a number of delicious recipes including Scotch Lamb Steaks with Ratatouille, Scotch Lamb stovies with celeriac mash, Scotch Lamb pizza and Scotch Lamb Dhansak.



The new videos join the other quick-time videos developed earlier this year using Scotch Beef PGI and Specially Selected Pork, which have proved a huge hit with media-savvy consumers looking for recipe inspiration online.+

To view the tempting new video recipes, and many more, please visit the Good Family Food Facebook page and [www.scotchkitchen.com](http://www.scotchkitchen.com)

Good family  
FOOD

# AWARD-WINNING CHEF BACKS SCOTCH LAMB CAMPAIGN

**Celebrity chef Jean-Christophe Novelli has urged consumers to make the most of the versatility and simplicity of cooking Scotch Lamb PGI.**

Jean-Christophe was in Scotland to give a cookery demonstration in the Scotch Lamb Cookery Theatre at the Dundee Flower and Food Festival and to promote "Love Lamb Week", a nationwide push to raise the profile of the speed and simplicity of lamb.

Voted "Chef's Chef of the Year", Jean-Christophe said Scotch Lamb was one of his favourite ingredients to cook with. He said: "Love Lamb Week is a fantastic opportunity for everyone to celebrate all that is special about lamb and spread the word about how simple it is to cook for a family meal any day of the week."



Whilst in Scotland, QMS arranged for the top chef to visit sheep farmers and butchers and learn about the care and commitment which goes into the production of Scotch Lamb, one of the finest ingredients in Scotland's larder.

He visited Wester Coul farm, near Kirriemuir, and spent time with sheep farmers Andrew Scott and Julie Hermitage, who run 600 Scotch Mule and Blackface breeding ewes. He then visited Yorkes of Dundee butchers, where the Yorkes team showcased a variety of really affordable cuts of lamb that are available.

Following the visits Jean-Christophe said: "It has been great to spend the day learning from the farmers who produce quality-assured Scotch Lamb and also spend time with the butchers who take pride in serving a great product to their customers." +

**QMS has produced a short video to show what happened when Jean-Christophe visited Wester Coul farm and Yorkes of Dundee.**

**To view the video visit, [www.qmscotland.co.uk/video-library](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/video-library)**

## QMS Launches 2016 Schools Meat Voucher Scheme

**Secondary schools around Scotland can benefit from a free QMS meat voucher to help encourage pupils to learn to cook simple, healthy meals.**

Every secondary school in Scotland is eligible to apply for a voucher, worth up to £100, which can be exchanged by the school at local retailers for Scotch Lamb PGI for use in the school's cookery classes.

The hugely successful Schools Meat Voucher Scheme, now in its ninth year, was developed by QMS in response to concerns that tight budgets mean many Scottish schools are unable to afford fresh, red meat products for cookery lessons.

Last year over 300 secondary schools took part in the initiative, which is one of a range of activities in QMS's health and education work to ensure people understand the role of red meat in a healthy, balanced diet. +





# Teachers Become First Good Food Champions

A group of teachers from Aberdeenshire are the first to gain new qualifications in food-related teaching in schools.

The “Good Food Champions” training scheme was developed by The Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET), QMS and the Royal Northern Countryside Initiative and is accredited by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS).

As part of the scheme, the teachers went on trips to working farms, conducted their own research and attended educational seminar and tasting sessions to help equip them with all they need to teach children about food and farming.

Jennifer Robertson, Health and Education Co-ordinator at QMS commented: “We are delighted to be involved with this innovative training scheme for teachers. We hope that they will continue to share their ‘soil to plate’ learning both within their schools and in the wider communities”.+



The Aberdeen teachers first to qualify as Good Food Champions.

## Sheep Farmers Support Scotch Lamb Promotion

Local farmers have joined QMS Scotch Lamb Ambassadors in supermarkets across Scotland to encourage shoppers to add Scotch Lamb PGI to their shopping baskets.

QMS organised 89 days of in-store sampling as part of this year’s Scotch Lamb PGI campaign and, at many of these events, local farmers came along to help serve delicious hot samples of Scotch Lamb to shoppers and highlight its fantastic taste, simplicity and versatility.+



**Many thanks to:** Daniel Hyslop of Clydeside Farm Lamington, Biggar (pictured above left), Ross and Kirsty Williams of Upper Tullochbeg, Huntly, Aberdeenshire (pictured above right) James Forbes of Clunebeg Farm, Pitlochry (pictured above middle) and Stuart Ross of Arr Farm, Lethen, Nairn who joined QMS Lambassadors in their local Tesco supermarkets recently to tempt consumers with tasty samples of Scotch Lamb PGI as part of the Scotland-wide QMS in-store promotional campaign.

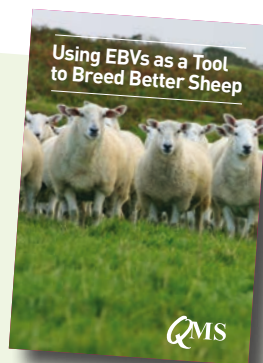
## NEW SHEEP EBV GUIDE AVAILABLE

QMS has produced a new guide, “Using EBVs as a Tool to Breed Better Sheep”, which offers producers practical information on tup selection.

The booklet provides a step-by-step guide for those interested in learning more about how EBVs can help them improve the performance of their flocks.

To request a copy, phone QMS on 0131 472 4040. It is also available to download from the QMS website [www.qmscotland.co.uk/publications](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/publications).

There is also a series of three case study videos showing how farmers in different production systems are successfully using EBVs along with visual assessment by eye to select the right tups for their flocks.+





# TRIPLER LAMB PERFORMANCE SOARS WITH PLANTAIN BOOST

The introduction of plantain, a mineral-rich grazing herb with a great track record in New Zealand, has proved a huge success on a Borders livestock farm.

**T**he perennial herb has been introduced at Pirntaton, near Galashiels, one of QMS's Grazing Group host farms.

Host farmer Jim Logan has managed to increase stock numbers significantly and cut feeding costs during the process, largely by improving grass management while better fitting feed requirements to the grass growth curve.

Pirntaton extends to 1,400 acres (570 hectares) rising from 750 feet to 1,700 feet and has a mixture of temporary and permanent grass with a significant area of rough grazing.

Jim had suggested growing plantain at one of the early grazing group meetings after reading about its valuable contribution to New Zealand grazing systems. Grazing consultant Trevor Cook, who has attended many meetings by invitation of QMS, was also keen the Logans tried a small area.

The establishment of an initial 32 hectares of plantain, mixed with red and white clover, has been a huge success. The crop is ideally suited to feeding priority groups of animals, such as triplet-rearing ewes or lambed hogs, so this spring Jim decided to see if his ewes could successfully rear triplets.



Plantain,  
mixed with  
red and  
white clover



Small paddocks of  
plantain mix were  
grazed rotationally





For further info about the  
Grazing Group project and  
future meetings in  
your area visit  
[www.qmscotland.co.uk/  
grazing](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/grazing)

The 32 acres of plantain and clover mix was divided into five paddocks and grazed rotationally with 70 sets of triplets followed by 170 ewes with singles in a leader/follower system.

“It was unbelievable how healthy and well-thriven the triplets were – they were some of the best lambs on the farm,” said Jim.

This was backed up by his weaning figures, which showed that the average weaning weight for the triplets, adjusted to 100 days, was 35.8kg. Single lambs averaged 39kg and the twins, which were rotationally grazed on standard grass mixtures, averaged 33kg.

These results have given Jim the confidence to establish a further 34 acres of plantain this season.

As well as increasing his ewe numbers from 1400 when the Grazing Group project began to 2000 this year, Jim has also changed breeds.

He has used Abertex and Romney genetics to upgrade the lowground breeding flock while continuing to use home-bred Suffolk and Texels as terminal sires. Suffolks, Texels and Abertex are bred pure and successfully sold as grass-fed rams.

The Blackface hill ewes have been replaced by Lairg Cheviots, which are crossed with Lleys to improve production. The lambing percentage across both flocks this year was 152% weaned.

“It was unbelievable how healthy and well-thriven the triplets were – they were some of the best lambs on the farm.”

“Lambing in late April/May means a lower scan, but survivability of the lambs is very good,” observed Jim.

He has also benefited from big savings on ewe concentrates, with his total feed bill down to £1.22 per lowground ewe last winter. He reckons his saving on concentrate is over 80% per head, while ewe numbers have already increased by over 20%.

“I avoided feeding any concentrate to the 700 ewes carrying twins and singles this spring by grazing them rotationally for four weeks before lambing,” Jim commented.

“It was amazing how well the ewes performed on the little, high-quality grass that was available to them, with the added bonus that early rotational grazing promotes grass growth for when I need it to set stock for lambing.”

The whole approach to grass management has been a revelation to many members of the QMS Grazing Group. When grass growth is strong and Jim knows that he has plenty grass supply ahead of him, paddocks will be taken out of the grazing round and cut for silage. This flexible approach ensures that grass quality and utilisation (for grazing) is maintained. Jim said that he was almost at the stage of making his full silage requirement from cutting those grazing paddocks as a grazing management tool.

Fertiliser applications are now better targeted, according to Jim.

“I applied 6kg per acre to grazing ground in late March and a further 6kg per acre in early September. This has not only extended the grazing season but the residual effect seems to help the vigour of early spring grass.”

One of the key aims of the QMS Grazing Groups is to maximise kg of meat per acre of grass, and Jim has shown at Pirntaton that it can be done.

“Our system is still far from perfect and doesn’t finish lambs any faster or at heavier weights than before,” he said. “However, it definitely produces more off the same area at a much lower cost.”



# Inspiring Big Changes on Bute Farm

There are a lot of changes taking place at Scalpsie Farm on the Isle of Bute as **Ian Dickson** is putting into practice a range of ideas gleaned from QMS meetings.



**T**wenty-nine-year-old Ian farms in partnership with his father, John, with help from his girlfriend, Lisa. They run 1,200 sheep and 140 cows on 1,300 acres rising from sea level to nearly 400 feet.

The challenges of farming on Bute include a high average rainfall of 45 inches, which

Ian said has been much higher for the last couple of years, and transport costs to get stock off the island and inputs on. However, it also has some advantages, such as being able to outwinter cattle on the shore.

The farm is also fairly self-sufficient in home-grown feed, with 30 acres of spring barley grown for home use, 12 to 15 acres of forage rape and the same of stubble turnips. Ian and his father have improved the 200 to 250 acres of ploughable land with re-seeding and also some of the permanent pasture, but the hill is not very productive and can only support about 30 cows over the winter.

Following Ian's forays to QMS Monitor Farm and Grazing Group meetings, both the sheep and cattle enterprises are in a transitional period.

"Visiting mainland farms and talking to other producers has been enlightening and has made me want to realise the full potential of my own farm," said Ian.

Working with Raymond Crerar of SAC Consulting, part of SRUC, Ian carried out a whole-farm review of Scalpsie last year and also installed a new Farmplan computer system. As a result, he is in a better position to plan the business and identify areas where improvements can be made.

The cattle are undergoing a transition as around 50 farmers saw for themselves at a recent QMS Suckler Herd and Bull Management workshop which was hosted at Scalpsie.







For your free copy of QMS's new publication  
**"A Guide to Bull Selection and Management"**  
 email [info@qmscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@qmscotland.co.uk) or download  
 from [www.qmscotland.co.uk](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk)

Ian is using Salers bulls to breed replacements and reports a marked improvement in ease of calving and vigour of calves from these cows, even when crossed with a Charolais, resulting in the herd consistently calving (and weaning) at 96% and above.

He is currently trying to reduce the calving period from 17 weeks to 12 so ran 142 cows with the bull this year, with the aim of calving 130 to 135 within the period. Bulls are fertility checked and routinely have their feet trimmed.

The cows are on a low-cost out-wintering system with 30 on the hill - which only receive silage from January onwards - and the remainder outwintered on the shore where they are fed silage and minerals. Heifers and anything looking lean are also supplemented with some home-grown barley.

The heifers start calving on 20th February and the cows on 1st March. They come inside to calve with progeny castrated, dehorned and tagged, and turned back out within seven days of calving.

Ian weighs the calves throughout the winter to ensure they are achieving their 1kg/day liveweight gain target, and they are usually sold at 10 to 12 months at United Auctions, Stirling. Again haulage has to be factored in at up to £15 per head.

This year he is selling some calves at eight months old. "I feel the finishers might prefer to buy lighter cattle as the specification weights for finished cattle have reduced, so I am selling some of the more forward ones in October," he said.

The traditional sheep enterprise of 700 Scotch Mules and 200 Blackface is being phased out to be replaced with Aberfields. He lambed his first batch of Aberfield cross and Mule hogs to the Aberfield this spring and has 300 going to the tup this year.

"Our hill does not graze many sheep, so the Blackies were running with the same inputs but only producing a lambing percentage at weaning of 150%, compared to the Mules at 175%," said Ian. "I like the fact the Aberfields are fully recorded, and the plan is to grade up to a small nucleus flock of pure Aberfields for replacements but use a terminal sire on the remainder."

By recording, Ian plans to identify the best-performing ewes and believes that he will improve his bottom line by going down the "easycare" route.

At the moment, the ewes come in at night during lambing and a night lamber is employed. The new flock will lamb a little later outdoors, but the faster growth rates should mean lambs will finish at the same time and he should have more lambs per hectare to sell.

The lambs are all finished off grass or forage rape, with the last marketed by the end of the year through Farmstock to Scotbeef. Last year they averaged 20kg, with 47% killing at U grade and above. However, Ian has to factor in haulage costs of around £2.80 per lamb. Despite this, the existing ewes are turning in a healthy gross margin of £51 per ewe after forage. He hopes to improve on this with the changes he is making to the system.

Again, from visiting QMS groups on the mainland, Ian has put into practice ideas such as rotational grazing, which he hopes will allow him to utilise his grass better and improve his gross margins per cow which are already a respectable £514 after forage.

Ian has enjoyed taking part in the QMS meetings and getting to know other young, progressive farmers from different parts of the UK. He is keen to benchmark his own farm using the QMS costing figures and to plan a profitable future for Scalpsie.+

## Scalpsie Farm - Moving Forward

- Whole-farm review of Scalpsie has led to better business planning and identified areas where improvements can be made.
- Aim to reduce calving period from 17 weeks to 12. Bulls are fertility checked and routinely have their feet trimmed.
- Calves weighed regularly through the winter to ensure they are achieving their target 1kg/day liveweight gain.
- Rotational grazing being introduced to utilise grass better, aiming to improve gross margins per cow, currently £514 after forage.
- Sheep enterprise of 700 Scotch Mules and 200 Blackfaces. Aberfield rams being used and the intention is to phase out the other breeds.



# FORAGE CROPS REDUCING WINTER FEED BILL

**An Aberdeenshire sheep and arable farmer is keeping winter feed costs low by optimising the use of forage and grass to minimise concentrate requirement.**

**J**ohn Simpson, who farms 420 acres at Parkhouse, Maud, in partnership with his parents, has developed a simple system which delivers many benefits and is reducing his winter concentrate bill to a fraction of that on similar units.

John's primary focus is keeping costs low and management simple through careful use of grass and establishing top-quality forage crops. He is now in a position where he rarely feeds concentrates to his ewes, which lamb outside from mid-April.

A further benefit of the regime is that it boosts grain and straw yields the following year, and the low-maintenance sheep enterprise fits well with the arable side of the business, most of which John does himself with the help of his father – plus contractors for sowing and spraying.

To keep feed costs low John, who is a member of QMS's North-East Grazing Group, aims to make the most of his grass and rotationally grazes until early winter.

As grass growth slows, he takes additional grazing from local beef farmers for the early winter, which he reckons costs him 6p/head/day.

"Grass does not grow all year here, and from November until the end of February growth is negligible," said John. "So, from early January, the ewes need something else."



QMS is running a series of free workshops on ewe wintering strategies over the winter months. Look out for more information in local press and at [www.qmscotland.co.uk/events](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/events)





To fill this period the ewes are out-wintered on 23 acres of a 3:1 swede to kale mix. The swede/kale mixture only costs one or two pence per head per day more than grass, and I seldom need to feed them anything else."

The ewes go onto the crop about six to eight weeks into pregnancy. When working out how much crop is required, John uses 3.5 acres for 100 sheep for 100 days as a rough guide. The ewes are then allocated a set amount every few days using a three-strand Polywire electric fence John keeps the amount allocated flexible, depending on weather and other factors.

"When the ewes go on, I know how many days till lambing and then work out how many metres to move a day. "If it gets really wet for a few days, I give them a new break whether they need it or not and when it's drier again, they can go back and tidy it up."

The farm has quite free-draining land and ewes have access to a stubble field as a run-back. If it's very wet, John will sometimes roll out straw.

Ewes, gimmers and in-lamb hogs carrying singles, twins and triplets are run as one group on the forage crop until about a week to 10 days before lambing. Mixing the kale with the swedes helps to provide the protein required, and no additional protein or minerals are provided.

They are condition scored when handled, and if individual animals are struggling they will be pulled out of the system. Close attention is paid to those carrying triplets (especially gimmers in lamb with triplets) and, if not in ideal condition, they will be put onto grass and sometimes offered concentrate feed. Likewise, if it's a poorer crop and the ewes are utilising it faster than planned, the singles are pulled out at pre-lambing vaccination time and put onto silage.

"The most important aspect for John is to establish a good forage crop; otherwise he may have to use supplementary feed with a bit of silage."

Ensuring good forage crop establishment is key, and the crop is sown in mid-May into a stale seedbed. The seed mix includes Maris Kestrel kale with Lomond and Invitation swedes.

Establishment consists of plough and press, followed by a power harrow and precision drill. Fertiliser use is 370kg/ha of 16-16-16 +S +boron. An additional top dressing of 40KgN/ha may also be used.

John feels that managing weeds is the biggest challenge, even with using a stale seedbed, and he is considering experimenting with direct drilling to reduce establishment costs. However, the most important aspect for John is to establish a good forage crop; otherwise he may have to use supplementary feed with a bit of silage.

"If there is a good crop of swedes then the ewes rarely need anything else, and they come off the swedes in similar or better condition than when they went on," he said.

The main advantage of wintering all the stock on forage crops is that the grass has time to recover over the winter and thus provides plenty of high-quality grass in the spring when the ewes need it most.

"A bonus of the forage is that it acts as a good break crop for the arable enterprise, and we see a significant improvement in yield of both grain and straw in the following crops of spring barley or spring oats," added John.

As an alternative to the swedes, John is considering trying fodder beet instead as it may be able to support a higher stocking rate and control weeds better.✚

## Parkhouse - Farm facts

- Stocking consists of **550 Highlander** (New Zealand composite) ewes. The aim is to run a breed which is profitable but not labour-intensive and to maximise the kg of lamb produced per ewe and per acre.
- One of the main advantages of the Highlander is that they lamb easily as hogs. This year, **200 ewe lambs** are going to the tup. Average hogg scanning percentage, including empties, is 125%. The scanning percentage for the main ewe flock is around 200%.
- All the lambs, except female replacements, are finished on the farm. Half are sold off grass and the remainder are finished on **20 acres** of brassicas and whole cereals with a 3-in-1 feeder, with the aim to have everything sold by early January.
- Lambs are sold deadweight to Woodhead Brothers. They average **19.5 to 20.5 kg**, with about two-thirds achieving R grade and one third U.
- **250 acres** of winter and spring barley is grown, along with spring oats and **43 acres** of forage crops. The rest of the farm is in permanent grass.
- **300 acres** owned, with 80 on a long-term tenancy and a further **40 acres** of grass taken on a seasonal let.



# SPECC HELPS FARMERS MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

**In business, a key measure of successful trading is knowing where your product comes from and the potential end market.**



**F**armers, auction markets and processors are seeing the value of an online tool recently launched by QMS, which allows them to check if cattle are potentially eligible for the Scotch Beef PGI brand.

The Scotch Potential Eligibility Cattle Checker (SPECC) is providing the Scottish red meat supply chain with a simple way to check cattle have been quality assured from birth.

Lanarkshire beef finisher John Brown from Gaintyhead, Airdrie, who farms in partnership with his father Jim and mother Jesme, has been using the web-based checker since the beginning of the year. SPECC has helped him with decision making in his business to promote Scotch Beef PGI.

One of the biggest finishers of beef cattle in Scotland and a QMS Cattle & Sheep quality assurance scheme member, John puts around 2,000 head through the farm each year, selling to ABP Perth and Scotbeef.

The Browns buy steers and heifers all year round at 480 to 500kg from markets in Stirling, Ayr and Lanark. They are finished at 680 to 700kg liveweight on a diet of potatoes (from the neighbouring Albert Bartlett processing plant), barley, dark grains and grass silage.

The average deadweight of animals is 360kg and John also sells five or six each week to local butchers and buys continental cross or Aberdeen Angus cattle at grass time to help supply what his customers want.

In John's view, one of the most important aspects to consider when he is buying cattle at the markets is whether an animal will qualify for the Scotch Beef PGI brand.

"Fully Scotch assured cattle are worth up to 15p/kg more to us at the abattoir, so it is very important to have clarity on this information before buying," he said.

He finds SPECC a helpful tool not only when buying cattle, but also for managing them once they are on his holding.

"A quick scan of the animal's passport will highlight if there has been a break in the assurance chain. I can then decide how long to keep it for," he said.

"Obviously I would rather every animal I buy is Scotch Potential Eligible but in reality that does not always happen, so by using SPECC I can easily identify animals and then determine the best end market for them."

John believes that this new, easy way of checking cattle eligibility should be an incentive for any farmers who are not QMS members to join up and become quality assured, including suckled calf producers who will increasingly be financially penalised for selling non-assured cattle.

Jill Hunter, Assurance Advisor with QMS, who has been working on SPECC since its launch, agreed.





## Gaindykehead - Farm Facts

- Originally the 320 acre grass farm supported 150 dairy cows but, in 2006, the decision was made to go out of dairy farming and gradually the cows were replaced with finishing cattle.
- The basic infrastructure was there to change enterprises but for the first five years, the SFP was re-invested to renovate buildings and build a slurry pit and slurry store.
- Numbers have increased for the past three years. The Browns now finish 2,000 cattle every year.
- The next steps for the business are to consider opportunities to further improve efficiency in their cattle feeding regime to optimise daily live weight gains.
- The Browns are also looking at better grass management, which is a challenge in Lanarkshire.
- The Browns also plan to develop their own Gaindykehead Beef brand.



"SPECC is about to go-live in Scottish auction markets, where its results will be displayed on sale ring boards, allowing potential buyers to make better informed decisions on which cattle they buy."

"By using SPECC, I can easily identify animals and then determine the best end market for them."

She explained that SPECC is quicker than the current checking system which is used by auction markets. Instead of the user having to scan each CPH number on a passport, it instantly provides the animal's status by simply scanning the top barcode on the passport," she added.

When SPECC goes live in auction markets, farmers will notice different animal statuses on sale ring boards. The status will be:

### SPE

- Scotch Potential Eligible

### FA + number of days

- Farm Assured

### NA

- Not Assured

The number of days after FA denotes the number of cumulative and successive days the animal has spent on QMS assured holdings.

Scottish abattoirs are also using SPECC to determine which cattle are eligible for the Scotch Beef PGI brand.

Murray Hardy of Scotbeef, Bridge of Allan said it has speeded up intake and made it easier to identify Scotch versus Farm Assured cattle.

"Everything we put through Scotbeef is Farm Assured but some customers want Scotch Assured and SPECC simplifies the identification process. We thoroughly recommend it and would like to see it being used throughout the purchasing chain," said Murray.

Frank Ross, General Manager at ABP, Perth said, "As an abattoir looking to source primarily Scotch Potential Eligible cattle, SPECC assists in speeding up animal status checking."

Farmers are being encouraged to use SPECC to check their cattle before presenting them for sale or slaughter, or when bringing new stock onto their farm.+

## SPECC - At a glance

**The Scotch Potential Eligibility Cattle Checker (SPECC) is a free tool from QMS which allows farmers, auction markets and abattoirs to check whether individual animals are potentially eligible for the Scotch Beef PGI brand.**



SPECC is very easy to use and returns quick search results. It allows farmers to view the status of all cattle which are currently registered on their holding(s) and check the status of any individual animal by manually entering the ear tag number or by scanning the short barcode at the top of the passport. An unregistered user can also perform ear tag number searches.

SPECC is hosted on the ScotEID website and for anyone not already registered with ScotEID, a simple two-step registration process is all that is needed to start using SPECC.

A free SPECC app is also available for users who are the move, which can be downloaded on Google play or Apple App Store. It allows the ear tag number to be scanned from the passport, using the mobile phone's camera or, alternatively, the ear tag number can be manually entered.

For more information and to start using SPECC please visit: [www.scoteid.com/qms/specc](http://www.scoteid.com/qms/specc)





# Taking a direct route

**Scottish pig farmers are renowned for being supremely efficient in producing pork and bacon for as little cost as possible without compromising welfare and quality.**

**O**ne producer in Aberdeenshire has stepped out of the production side and got involved in retail, and the resulting Ingram's Homecure brand is now a popular choice for consumers in the north east of Scotland.

Sandy Ingram and his wife, Ann, farm 280 acres at East Pitscuff, Newburgh, growing wheat and barley to feed the 120 breeding sows and the finishing unit which was established in 1982.

It was not until 1999 that Sandy began home-curing his own pork. He said, "I always had an interest in home-curing and I saw it as a way to add value to my home-produced pork. I was fortunate that about the same time as I started, farmers' markets began to spring up locally giving me an outlet for the product."

Since then he has gone from strength to strength and now between 15 and 20% of the pork he produces is sold through Ingram's Homecure. The remainder of the finished pigs go to Millers of Speyside or marketed through QPL at Brechin.



Sandy employs a full-time butcher and puts eight to ten of his pigs through the business per week with the most popular products being bacon, gammon and sausages. Sandy said: "It has always been easy to sell the bacon. The challenge has been selling the rest of the carcase, but we have worked hard on marketing it and now we sell a lot more sausages and fresh meat."

"I believe the QMS Specially Selected Pork promotions really help to get the message out to people that it is a healthy, easy-to-cook and delicious meat."

He takes his product to five local farmers' markets every month and has also developed a sound retail customer base in farm shops, delis, local restaurants and garden centres. His own farm shop is well off the beaten track, but he said there are quite a few customers who come in on a regular basis.

A regular exhibitor at Taste of Grampian, Sandy launched a rebrand and a new website for Ingram's Homecure earlier this year, which has been successful, although he said he is a bit disappointed with sales through the website. He said: "People see product on the web, but they seem to prefer to phone and order rather than buy from the site. However, it is still early days and we have been lucky to attract a new restaurant customer."







Even though sales are going well, Sandy is keen to increase the percentage of his fresh pork sales. He said: "Bacon and sausages are the biggest sellers, followed by gammons. I hand out QMS recipe leaflets at the markets to encourage people to buy fresh pork, and I believe the QMS Specially Selected Pork promotions really help to get the message out to people that it is a healthy, easy-to-cook and delicious meat."

He believes he has a good story to tell, with all the pigs bred on the farm from a high-health herd produced to exacting welfare standards, and he reckons one of the reasons people like the meat is that it has been on the farm from "conception to consumption".

The breeding stock at East Pitscaff comes from JSR Genetics where the focus is on the eating quality of pork. Sandy has signed up to the new Scottish Pig Health Charter and said: "Anything which improves the health and welfare of the Scottish pig industry is worthwhile."

Sandy is finishing about 3,000 pigs per year, which take around 23 weeks to finish at the target weight of 85kg deadweight.

Sandy said: "I used to have about 300 sows but I reduced numbers so I could be self-sufficient in feed, and all the grain I grow on the farm is fed to my pigs."

He recently reduced his sow numbers again slightly, as conception and weaning rates have been very good at around 30 pigs weaned per sow per year. Sandy said it has been encouraging to see around a 25ppkg increase in the price of pigmeat in the last few weeks, as the majority of his pigs are sold through Scottish Pig Producers.

Sandy is careful to keep the two businesses separate, and Ingram's Homecure buys pigs at a premium from the farm business. At the moment Sandy does all the marketing, sales and deliveries himself for the retail business and the aim is to develop it to a stage where he can justify employing someone, even part-time, to help out. He said: "The advantage of selling direct to the customer is that there is less price volatility, so the more pigs I can put through Ingram's Homecure, the better."+

## EAST PITSCAFF : AT A GLANCE

Farmed by  
**Sandy Ingram**  
in partnership with  
wife, **Ann**.

**280**  
acres

Finishing  
**3,000**  
pigs per  
year

**120**  
breeding  
sows

Finishing  
unit established  
**1982**







# ★ WHAM ★ BAM LAMB



**T**his year's edgy "Wham Bam Lamb" campaign, which focuses on how simple and quick Scotch Lamb is to cook, was launched on 8th August - with the digital campaign running through until the end of October. It is set to reach nearly 90% of Scottish adults conveying the main message that lamb can provide delicious, nutritious family meals in less than 30 minutes.

Suzie Carlaw, QMS Marketing Controller, pointed out that historically the campaign has been successful in boosting lamb sales. She said: "The key is to get more Scottish people eating lamb. Get rid of the old, stuffy, traditional image that lamb is only good for a Sunday roast, and reposition it as a modern, versatile, mid-week meal solution."

The current £170,000 QMS campaign aims to promote Scotch Lamb PGI to a wide audience through billboard, press and radio advertising as well as online and in-store activities. Last year's campaign boosted retail sales of lamb in Scotland by 11% and the 2016 promotion aims to build on that, targeting 1.1 million consumers.

Suzie explained: "Fifty per cent of the budget is spent on billboard advertising, 20% on radio, 10% on press and 20% on digital marketing. Adverts on commercial radio stations manage to get the versatile Scotch Lamb message across to consumers on their busy commute, at a time when they may be thinking about what they would like for their dinner. This is then backed up by visual marketing outside stores, which encourages consumers to buy the product."

Online marketing methods, including Facebook and Twitter have become important tools for the marketing team at QMS, especially among the target audience of young professionals and busy working parents. Suzie said: "The trend now is for people to search for online recipes rather than reach for the old cook book to inspire them to cook their evening meal." She pointed out that some fantastic, quick and easy recipes such as Scotch Lamb PGI Tikka kebabs can be found through the The Scotch Kitchen's Facebook and twitter pages or on the whambamlamb.com website.

During the campaign, farmers have been encouraged to go along to their local supermarket and promote their product with the support of QMS, which provides recipe leaflets and branded T-shirts. One farmer to do this was James Forbes of Clunebeg Farm, Pitlochry, who spent the day in Perth Tesco tempting consumers with tasty samples of lamb.



Reach  
**1.1m**  
consumers



**240**  
retail  
outlets  
received  
branded POS  
materials

**1.8m**  
Facebook  
impressions



**1.3m**  
Facebook  
reach



**95**  
days  
of sampling



**75**  
outdoor  
poster  
sites



**Scotch Lamb PGI is at its delicious best during the autumn months when supply is plentiful and QMS has an important role to play in promoting it extensively during this period.**

He said: "I think these events are a fantastic opportunity for farmers to engage with consumers about what goes into putting fresh, tasty Scotch Lamb on their plates. By giving shoppers a taste of this fantastic product, we hope to remind those who don't regularly buy lamb what a great, versatile meat it is."

Suzie added: "The Scottish sheep industry is justifiably proud of the Scotch Lamb they produce in Scotland. We hope that by tempting shoppers with a wee taste of this fantastic product, we can encourage families to put this versatile meat on their shopping list."

Another part of the campaign was "Love Lamb Week" which ran from 1st to 7th September 2016, on the back of the successful "Love Lamb Weekend" in 2015. It kicked off at the Dundee Flower and Food Festival, where celebrity chefs such as Jean Christophe Novelli used Scotch Lamb as one of their main ingredients in demonstrations. The famous French chef claims it is one of his favourite ingredients to cook with and during the festival spent time on a Scottish sheep farm and visited well-known butchers, Yorkes of Dundee.

Butchers have a huge part to play in promoting the product and point-of-sale leaflets are available in all QMS's Scotch Butchers Club shops, but this September many of the country's top butchers promoted lamb in a slightly unusual way. QMS supported the Edinburgh KiltWalk on 18th September as part of the Scotch Lamb PGI campaign and several Scottish butchers donned their kilts and trainers to join the KiltWalk to raise funds for the STV Appeal which supports children's projects throughout Scotland.

As part of the promotion of the STV Appeal and the Scotch Lamb campaign, QMS arranged for Breakfast TV queen Lorraine Kelly to visit the Jackson family who farm in Forfar and the Scott Brothers at their Broughty Ferry butcher's shop to learn more about Scotch Lamb and to thank the KiltWalking butchers and farmers for their fundraising support.

While it is too early to say how successful this year's Scotch Lamb campaign will be, Suzie and the rest of the marketing team at QMS are confident that they are getting the message across to consumers. Thanks go to all the farmers who have assisted with sampling activities and PR behind the campaign.✚



**10**  
press adverts



**30,000**  
recipe leaflets distributed

**107k**  
consumer emails

**35,000**  
recipe inserts



**3**  
**weeks**  
of radio ads



**1,000**  
lamb books distributed



**216,000**  
Twitter impressions

**7,078**  
twitter followers

**11**  
**weeks**  
of digital advertising





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