

LIVESTOCK+

QMS Sharing best practice from Scottish livestock businesses

SUMMER 2017

+ Updates

ON THE ROAD WITH A FARM
ASSURANCE ASSESSOR

SCOTCH BEEF PGI CAMPAIGN
FOCUSES ON QUALITY AND FLAVOUR

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW ENTRANTS
TO THE SCOTTISH PIG INDUSTRY

FEATURES

**Good Suckler Cow Fertility
Achieved on Borders Farm**

**Nithsdale Monitor Farm
Plans for the Future**

**Paddock Grazing Pays
Dividends for Cattle Farmer**

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WELCOME

The coming weeks will see QMS supporting many important industry events around the country, including NSA Highland Sheep on May 31st and Scotland's Beef Event on June 8th.

We've included features on those hosting the events in this edition of Livestock+ and one quality which resonates from both of these farming families is a determination to constantly seek out better ways of running their businesses.

We look forward to welcoming those of you who are able to attend the events in person to the QMS stand, and for those who can't be there, please look out for the preview videos which we will be launching via your social media feeds soon.

Next month sees one of the most important events in the agricultural calendar, which both showcases the industry to the general public and provides an important business platform for farmers – the Royal Highland Show.

This year's event will see QMS pull out all the stops to ensure consumers are in no doubt of what sets the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands apart.

We've a great line up of well-known chefs set to inspire visitors with demonstrations of simple, quick, tasty beef, lamb and pork dishes, along with the popular butchery demonstrations.

The QMS cookery theatre is also set to host a cook-off between two well known TV weather presenters and we'll again be working with the Royal Highland Education Trust to cook with hundreds of young people in the Scotch Beef Children's Cookery Theatre at the Discovery Centre.

The team manning our bustling stand kitchen will be rustling up a steady flow of tasty samples for the public to enjoy and the education area at the front of our stand will be packed with interactive activities to ensure visitors are informed about our industry's great messages on animal welfare and the environment as well as the important role of red meat in a healthy diet. We're pleased that the Scottish SPCA will again be joining QMS in this area of our stand.

Importantly, the show offers a great opportunity for our levypayers to meet with members of the QMS team and hear the latest on the wide-ranging activities being delivered for the industry.

Notably, it will be the final show as QMS chief executive for 'Uel Morton, before he hands over the reins to Alan Clarke in early July.

Sincere thanks go to 'Uel for his hard work and commitment to the development of QMS over the past decade and our best wishes to him for the future.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible at the Royal Highland Show and at the other industry events in the coming weeks.✦

Jim McLaren,
Chairman, Quality Meat Scotland

LIVESTOCK+

How to contact QMS:
visit www.qmscotland.co.uk
email info@qmscotland.co.uk
or call us on 0131 472 4040

For the latest, up-to-the-minute information follow us on Twitter or like our Facebook page – Quality Meat Scotland.

Sign up for our free weekly e-newsletter at www.qmscotland.co.uk

To see some of the latest videos we have produced supporting the industry, please visit:
www.qmscotland.co.uk/video-library

Issue 12, Summer 2017
Published by Quality Meat Scotland, 2017
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ISSN 2057-0368

This publication is printed on an FSC certified paper, supporting responsible use of forest resources.

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Chief Executive's Update



This will be my final contribution to LIVESTOCK+ before I step down after 11 years with QMS and two decades in chief executive roles in the Scottish food and drink industry.

I will leave with a great sense of pride in what Quality Meat Scotland achieves and many fond memories.

Early in my time with QMS, the re-opening of the beef export market in 2006 was a crucial landmark in our industry's history, as was the establishment of Scotland Food & Drink the following year.

In 2008 QMS was established as a public body and a highlight of 2009 was taking Scotch Beef PGI to Bocuse D'Or in Lyon and this successful opportunity was repeated in 2011 for Scotch Lamb PGI.

There are many more landmark industry achievements I could mention but, for me personally, it will be the dedication and commitment of the many folk who work in the Scottish red meat industry which I will long remember.

The forging of strong working relationships with key partners such as the Scottish SPCA, Scotland Food & Drink and the Royal Highland Education Trust, are vital to ensure QMS delivers strongly for the industry.

As an organisation we aim to be very open and transparent and I have greatly valued the constant flow of dialogue with farmers, butchers, processors, auctioneers and others involved at all levels of our industry.

Visitors to the office are constantly surprised about how few people work for QMS, given the volume and diversity of the workload delivered.

This ranges from our marketing work to promote the Scotch beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands to our economics work, providing information and vital intelligence on emerging trends.

Our health and education team's work is also very valuable as is the ambitious workload of our industry development staff, including the delivery of the latest monitor farm programme.

One key growth area has been the use of social media and QMS' communications team continues to capitalise on this opportunity.

I hope to see many of you at the Royal Highland Show next month but I would also like to extend my personal thanks to each and every one of you who has supported QMS in so many ways during the past decade to help us deliver for the industry.✦

Uel Morton

Uel Morton,
Chief Executive,
Quality Meat Scotland

Fife Primary School Pupils Quiz Top UK Chef Duo

Two winners of BBC MasterChef: The Professionals - Gary Maclean, current title holder and 2014 winner Jamie Scott - visited Newport Primary School in Fife to inspire pupils to enjoy a healthy, balanced diet and the role of great local ingredients such as Scotch Beef PGI.



In a visit organised by QMS as part of the Scotch Beef Marketing Campaign, the two champions spoke to an audience of over 200 pupils about the importance of learning to cook and a healthy balanced diet, as well as their careers and experiences of appearing on MasterChef.

Gary said: "I was really impressed by the questions the children asked and their genuine interest in learning more about healthy food and careers in the food industry."

Jamie Scott, who now owns the Newport Restaurant, located just a short distance from the school, said: "I've had a fantastic time speaking to such a great bunch of enthusiastic kids.

"It's so important that children have the opportunity to be inspired about a healthy diet, but also that they have a good

understanding of where food comes from and how to cook tasty, nutritious meals.

"It's also been great to finally meet Gary and have a chat about our MasterChef experience!"✦



World-class Swimmers "Get Cooking"

A group of Scotland's top swimmers donned aprons and got to grips with a griddle pan recently to prepare a range of healthy dishes using Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI.

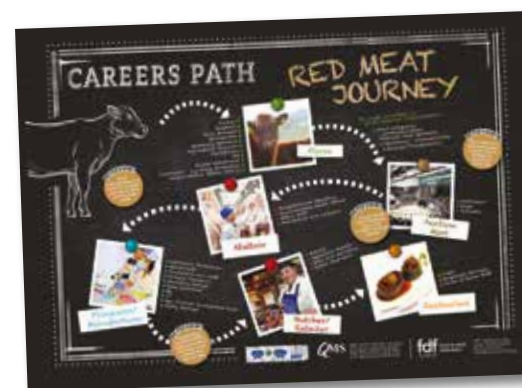
Ten Scottish swimmers, including Olympic Duncan Scott and Commonwealth Games ace Ross Murdoch, attended a four-week "Get Cooking" cookery project run by QMS and sportscotland.

Facilitated by Chef Consultant Scott Lyall, the sessions aimed to help the athletes translate the nutritional messages they receive into real food.

Olympic medalist Duncan Scott, who picked up two silvers in the 4 x 200m freestyle and 4 x 100m medley at Rio in 2016, said he had thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and couldn't believe how good his meals, made from scratch, tasted.

He said: "It was fantastic being part of this project, as it's given me a range of new recipes to try which are not complicated - they are quick, easy, nutritious and, most importantly, very tasty!"✦

For recipe inspiration when cooking with Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI, visit www.scotchkitchen.com or follow @ScotchKitchen on Facebook or Twitter.



NEW POSTER HIGHLIGHTS CAREERS IN THE RED MEAT INDUSTRY

A new poster aimed at highlighting the careers available in the Scottish red meat industry has been launched by QMS and Food and Drink Federation (FDF) Scotland.

With over 50,000 jobs linked to the production of beef, lamb and pork in Scotland, the Red Meat Journey Career Path Poster aims to increase awareness among young people of the wide range of exciting career opportunities available throughout the red meat supply chain.

As well as being distributed to every secondary school in Scotland, the poster will be used at career events and school workshops.✦

The poster is available to download for free online at www.qmscotland.co.uk and www.fdfscotland.org.uk. Teachers can also request hard copies of the posters by contacting QMS on 0131 472 4040 or info@qmscotland.co.uk

Rugby Star Scrums Down with Butcher, Chef and Farmer

Rugby star Stuart Hogg scrummed down with a farmer, a chef and a butcher recently to mark the launch of QMS's campaign to raise the profile of Scotch Beef PGI and all that sets it apart.

Stuart, who was voted player of the Six Nations tournament in both 2016 and 2017, was joined by QMS Chairman and Perthshire beef farmer Jim McLaren; butcher Bel Forbes from Bel's Butchers in Edzell, Angus, who is a member of the QMS Scotch Butchers Club run by QMS; and Jeff Bland, Executive

Chef at the Balmoral Hotel, Edinburgh - a member of the Scotch Beef Club.

As a professional sportsman at the top of his game, Stuart takes eating a healthy diet extremely seriously and Scotch Beef is one of his favourite ingredients!

"In this job it is incredibly important to fuel your body correctly. All the training and conviction in the world won't make up for a diet that is not right.

"It's been great to hear all about the traceability and quality assurance behind Scotch Beef, and to get a sense of the passion and pride of those who work in the beef industry in Scotland."✦

For more information about the Scotch Beef Marketing Campaign, see pages 22-23.



MasterChef Champion Backs Scotch Beef PGI Campaign

The current winner of BBC MasterChef: The Professionals has set himself the challenge of doing all he can to inspire consumers about the exceptional quality of Scottish produce, including Scotch Beef PGI.

Top chef Gary Maclean is determined to encourage more consumers to better understand the traceability and quality assurance behind Scotch Beef PGI as well as the glorious heritage which makes it the envy of the world.

"Our beef is just simply incredible and what sets it apart are the traditional production methods used plus the generations of farmers working to maintain that high quality," said Gary.

Crowned the winner of MasterChef: The Professionals in December 2016, Gary is also a senior lecturer at City of Glasgow College and is committed to encouraging more children to cook with quality products such as Scotch Beef. +

Recipes and information about Scotch Beef PGI can be found at www.scotchkitchen.co.uk or follow @ScotchKitchen on Facebook or Twitter.



NEW FILM PROMOTES "SHEEP-WISE" CAMPAIGN

A short film promoting a new "sheep-wise" campaign launched by QMS and NSA Scotland warns the public about the consequences of failing to control their dogs in the countryside.

Scotland's rural organisations have united behind the campaign, which has the support of the Scottish SPCA, Police Scotland, the British Veterinary Association, NFU Scotland, Scottish Land & Estates and Scottish Natural Heritage.



The high-impact, two-minute film highlights the devastation, for farmers and dog owners, caused by sheep worrying.

The film features powerful, first-hand accounts of the impact of sheep worrying from Aberdeenshire farmer John Fyall, vet David McLaren (of Kirkton Veterinary Centre, Stonehaven) and Gill MacGregor, Scottish SPCA Senior Inspector.

Narrated by a dog lover, the film also articulates the anguish which dog owners face, along with potential criminal prosecution, if they fail to control their dogs properly in the countryside. +

To view the video, visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/video-library

New Chief Executive Announced for QMS



Alan Clarke has been appointed as the new Chief Executive for QMS.

Alan, who is currently chief executive of Scottish Bakers, will take over the reins from 'Uel Morton, who will step down in July 2017 after 11 years in the role.

Alan took up his position with Scottish Bakers six years ago, and highlights

during his tenure have included the establishment of the first Scottish Bakers Export Group and increasing overall membership by 22%. A previous director of Lifelong Learning UK, Alan also held the post of chief executive of a Sector Training Council in Northern Ireland for ten years.

Jim McLaren, Chairman of QMS, said the appointment followed a robust recruitment process. He commented: "We look forward to welcoming Alan on board this summer. He brings with him a wealth of experience, in both the private and public sectors, and a strong skillset including governance, finance, project management, people management and IT skills."

Mr McLaren also extended sincere thanks to 'Uel Morton for his huge contribution over the past decade to the development of QMS, saying he will leave the organisation in a very strong position to move forward. +

SPECIALLY SELECTED PORK SUPPORTS TASTE OF GRAMPIAN 2017

A star-studded line-up of culinary talent has been announced for this year's Taste of Grampian event, which will again be sponsored by Specially Selected Pork.

The culinary stars include celebrity chef James Martin; Lady Claire Macdonald of Kinloch Hotel and Restaurant, Kenny McMillan of Pittodrie House Hotel; and Brian McLeish, BBC MasterChef finalist and Chef Proprietor of Moonfish Restaurant in Aberdeen.

The award-winning North-East food festival is taking place at Thainstone Centre on Saturday 3 June. The event attracts more than 14,000 visitors annually and is celebrating its 18th year.

Taste of Grampian Chairman John Gregor said: "We are very excited to be working with Quality Meat Scotland to highlight the quality, versatility and fantastic taste which underpin the Specially Selected Pork brand." +



Rain or Shine Judith Launches BBQ Time

One of the country's most popular TV weather presenters, Judith Ralston, swapped forecasting for flame grilling to launch a new nationwide fund-raising initiative.

For more information on how to get involved with The Big Scotch Beef Sizzle, visit: www.scotlandshospices.org

The Big Scotch Beef Sizzle, run by Scotland's Hospices Together, is set to see a burst of BBQ activity taking place throughout Scotland during June to raise funds for hospices around the country.

Supported by Scotch Beef PGI, the initiative will encourage Scots to put steaks and burgers on the barby to raise vital funds for hospice care.

Scotland's Hospices Together is a national partnership of ten of Scotland's independent hospices and the Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS). The partnership aims to support and highlight the work of hospice care in Scotland.

Judith, who regularly presents the weather on BBC Reporting Scotland, said she couldn't think of a better way to catch up with friends and family while raising money for such a worthwhile cause.

"The secret of a successful BBQ is to be prepared - pack an umbrella along with the suncream, and there will be nothing to stop the fun!" said Judith.

"I would encourage everyone to get involved in the Big Scotch Beef Sizzle, which is a fantastic way to help your local hospice and your local community," she added. +

QMS Welcomes New Team Member

QMS has appointed Rebecca Rainnie as a Knowledge Transfer Specialist in the Industry Development Team.



With a BSc Honours degree in Rural Business Management from the SRUC Aberdeen campus, Rebecca has worked in a variety of roles in the livestock sector in Scotland, most recently as Marketing Coordinator at Harbro Ltd, where she has worked since 2014.

Doug Bell, QMS Head of Industry Development, commented: "I am delighted to welcome Rebecca to the team, where she will help deliver a range of activities aimed at improving the efficiency, profitability and sustainability of livestock farmers in Scotland." +

ATTENTION TO DETAIL IS KEY

The Stewart family in the Scottish Borders are busy preparing to host Scotland's Beef Event on Thursday, June 8th.

Douglas Stewart, alongside his wife Kelda, father Graham and children, Holly and Archie, farm 400 Aberdeen-Angus cows at Fans Farm, Earlston, with all calves sold finished, except any heifers retained for breeding.

The beef enterprise is an important part of a highly efficient integrated farming enterprise covering a total of 983 hectares on three farms, including land rented for grazing and potatoes.

The Fans beef enterprise has turned full circle over the past 40 years. The original herd of pedigree Aberdeen-Angus was phased out in the 1970s, when the Stewart family moved into commercial beef production based on bought-in dairy cross calves crossed with Charolais bulls.

However, health considerations in the wake of the BSE crisis in the 1990s prompted the family to return to Aberdeen-Angus, with a view to breeding their own replacement females.

Today the suckler herd has been expanded to 400 home-bred Aberdeen-Angus cows, which are now virtually pure-bred.

The reintroduction of Aberdeen-Angus at Fans, albeit on a more commercial basis, came after much careful consideration, though it didn't take long for the Stewarts to become convinced that the Aberdeen-Angus breed ticked all the boxes. "This is one of the best decisions we have ever made," says Douglas.

"We now have a more consistent type of cow, as we have more control breeding our own replacements rather than being dependent on the by-product from a dairy herd.

"The Angus cows are more easily handled because of their better temperament, they have a shorter gestation period and fewer calving difficulties, fertility has been greatly improved and we no longer run the risk of buying in disease."

Great emphasis is placed on feet, udders and temperament in the selection of females for breeding. Heifers for breeding are treated well to get them big enough to put to the bull at 15 months of age.

Bulls are only out with the cows for eight weeks, and any cows not in calf when they are pregnancy tested in October are culled.

The strict management regime and a ruthless culling policy have resulted in a tight calving period. All cows calve in April and May, with 92-93% of calves born in the first six weeks.

A calving percentage as high as 95% of cows put to the bull has been achieved for several years at Fans. The herd is a member of the Premium Health Scheme and BVD accredited. The herd has been closed since 1997 and only bulls are bought in.

All 14 bulls on the farm were bought privately, with great emphasis being placed on maternal traits, particularly calving ease and milk, as well as growth rate. "We buy the bulls in a leaner condition than you can expect to buy at auction which means, they are ready to work, their feet are right and they last longer," said Douglas.

The shorter gestation period of the Angus cow means that very few calvings are assisted. In the best year so far, only 24 cows out of 400 required assistance at birth, and the vet was never on the farm during calving. All assisted calvings are carefully recorded and given a score which determines if the cows are to be kept or culled.

A calving percentage as high as 95% of cows put to the bull has been achieved for several years at Fans.

Cows are moved out of dry cow areas for calving and—once settled—cows and calves are turned out to grass, usually within 24 hours of calving.

A calf creep is introduced in late August, depending on grass growth. Calves from first calved heifers are weaned at the end of September and cows in October. After weaning, cows are turned out for a few more weeks and are usually housed for the winter by the beginning of December.

Cows are wintered on silage and straw, with any thinner cows getting some barley. Weaned calves are on silage and barley before gradually going on to an intensive cereal diet in March and April for finishing. The herd is kept young by culling cows at around 10 years of age, when they still have value, and around 80 heifers are brought into the herd each year.

"Cull cows are worth the same as 14-month-old heifers coming into the herd, so it makes sense to replace them before they become too old to put on flesh," Douglas explains.

Bull calves are kept entire and, along with feeding heifers, are finished inside through the summer on home-grown barley. They are ready for slaughter at around 14-15 months of age, and last year averaged 392.6kg deadweight and achieved an average price of £1,367/head net (348p/kg). All finished cattle are weighed regularly, with the aim of getting them as close to maximum weight as possible within the processor's specification, and they are marketed every two weeks.

The name of the game at Fans is attention to detail. The high standard of management means the herd is profitable, with built-in sustainability, and well placed to meet the challenges of the post-Brexit era.✚



QMS is delighted to be a major supporter of Scotland's Beef Event, being held at Fans Farm on Thursday 8th June. Hope to see you there!

Highland Sheep Host Strives for Constant Improvement



The Kinnahaird Team; from l-r Dorothy Clark, Amy Grant, Billy Thow, Mike Renwick, and sitting with lambs, Amy's sons Andrew, John and Harry.



A determination to constantly seek opportunities to further improve the performance of her farm is the mantra of Amy Grant, the host of NSA Highland Sheep on May 31st.

Amy runs 450 ewes and 160 suckler cows over 400 hectares at Kinnahaird Farm near Strathpeffer. She is 100% focused on doing the very best job she can and has no regrets about her decision to return to work on the farm following the sudden, unexpected death of her father John in 2000.

This meant a radical switch away from studying Russian with marketing, to a career in farming which she absolutely loves. "I wouldn't dream of doing anything else," she said.

Perhaps because of her lack of involvement in the farm in earlier days, she approaches the business of farming with an open mind, continually questioning what she's doing on the farm and looking at how the performance of the cattle and sheep can be improved.

The flock is closed, apart from bought-in rams, and the emphasis is on maternal traits.

It is made up of Cheviot Mules and Texel cross ewes along with North Country Cheviots which are crossed with the Bluefaced Leicester to produce replacement Mules with plenty of milk and excellent mothering instincts.

Interestingly, the terminal sires used are crossbred – Charolais x Texel and Charolais x Beltex – with the aim of producing lambs with length and good conformation. Lambing starts the third week of March, and last year the first finished lambs were sold by 23 June. Most lambs are finished off grass without supplementary feeding, with the aim of producing a 21kg carcass.

This year's scanning percentage was 197% and Amy is hopeful, with the good weather pre and post lambing, that the final lambing percentage will be close to the scanning figure.

Lambing has been going well, with ewes in good condition and very few prolapses.

Triplets are not welcome, because of the work involved in cross-fostering, which is why Amy has opted for the Cheviot Mule rather than the Scotch Mule.

Up to now, all lambs have sold live through the ring at Dingwall, but Amy is considering selling some deadweight, to follow through carcass quality and assess which tups are leaving the lambs achieving the highest killing out percentage.

Kinnahaird is currently one of several farms conducting a feeding trial with Harbro designed to identify ways of boosting ewe health and lamb vitality through improved nutrition.

The trial involves three groups of ewes being fed slightly different rations for three weeks before lambing.

The ewes are being blood tested and lambs weighed to monitor performance and the hope is to announce the results of the trial at NSA Highland Sheep.

Cows in the suckler herd are mainly Simmental cross and are mostly put to the Simmental bull, with the Limousin being used on heifers. However, this year a Salers bull has been bought privately because of the Salers' reputation for having the largest pelvic area of any beef breed. The bull has put 19 of the 20 heifers he ran with safely in calf.

A high health status has been maintained over the years and the herd is accredited for BVD and leptospirosis. It is 20 years since the last case of Johne's disease on the farm and the herd has screened negative for IBR.

Amy is conscious that many commercial suckler herds don't want to calve bought-in heifers, so 30 additional Simmental cross heifers are being retained this year for serving.

Most lambs are finished off grass without supplementary feeding, with the aim of producing a 21kg carcass.



QMS is delighted to be a major supporter of Highland Sheep, being held at Kinnahaird Farm on Wednesday 31st May. Hope to see you there!

Kinnahaird Farm

The first two Highland Sheep events at Dingwall Mart in 2013 and Fearn Farm in 2015 were a great success and attracted a large attendance of interested sheep farmers.

With the reputation of Kinnahaird for high-quality stock, and the excellent facilities on the farm, this year's Highland Sheep is all set to be equally successful.✚

These are likely to be calved and sold with calves at foot.

Heifers are normally sold as bulling heifers at Dingwall at 12 to 15 months of age and steers as stores. Some are sold at weaning when the price per kilo is generally higher. All calves are weighed regularly to monitor performance.

Around 65 hectares of spring barley are grown each year for malting and 20 hectares of winter barley for feeding on the farm. Around 60 hectares are cut once for silage with the emphasis being on high quality rather than bulk.

Efforts are being made to improve the grassland on the farm, much of which hasn't been touched for 30 years, and last year 13 hectares were reseeded.

Amy will be hosting NSA Scotland's third biennial event for sheep farmers in the north with her mother, Dorothy Clark, and sister, Sheena.

Kinnahaird Farm Facts

400
hectares

197%
scanning
rate

450
Cheviot Mule,
Texel and
North Country Cheviots,
Bluefaced
Leicester ewes

Lambs finished
end June
avg. **21kg**
carcass weight

160
suckler
cow herd

Heifers and
steers sold at
12-15 months
at Dingwall

ACHIEVING GOOD SUCKLER COW FERTILITY

Breeding a hard-working, productive suckler cow which requires little hands-on management is key to the success of the Livesey family's Borders farm.

Rob, Kath and son Iain run a herd of 90 Salers cows at Firth Farm, Lilliesleaf, alongside 1,100 Mule ewes. They took over the tenancy of Firth, which extends to 223 hectares, in 1998 and have since grown the business to 324 hectares.

Most of the farm is down to five-to-seven year grass leys, although there are about 25 hectares of permanent grass, and 49 hectares are ploughed for winter cereals each year.

They have used a Salers bull since they moved to Firth and gradually bred up the cows so that the herd is now pure. Rob said: "We started with the breed because of its easy calving and because we wanted a simple system, but we have been impressed with how fertile and easy to manage they are. Now we are in a position to know which cows have the best maternal genetics and select accordingly, improving the herd all the time."

Culling hard and only keeping females from the best families has meant that from 2014 to 2016 no more than one cow each year has not been in calf. There can be more empty heifers and Rob finds that, as a rule, they are not as fertile as the cows. There are no second chances, though, and anything not in calf is removed from the breeding herd.

Heifers calve down at two-years-old, and Rob aims to have them around 380kg to 400kg at 15 months when they go to the bull. Any animals lighter than that are not retained in the herd.

A tight calving period is critical, according to Rob, and he achieves this by working with nature as much as possible. He said: "After being health-checked, bulls go out around 15th June when grass is at its peak, summer days are long and the cows are at their most fertile."

All the bulls go out at the same time, but the cows get nine to ten weeks while the heifers only get six weeks. The Liveseys regularly achieve 60-70% cows calving in the first three weeks of the calving period, and over 90% inside six weeks. In 2016, 65% of the cows calved to the first turn (three weeks) while second turn was 32%. Rob said: "It is an advantage of easy calving that they are also easy to get back in calf."

A compact calving period means that Rob and Iain have more heifers achieving their target weights at bulling, which gives them more mature replacements to select from. Surplus heifers are sold for breeding, either privately or at Castle Douglas.

Each year, seven to eight of the best bull calves are kept entire and either retained or sold as breeding bulls. The steers are sold at around 17 months when they weigh approximately 540kg.

Steers are currently sold at Aberdeen and Northern Marts, where Rob and Kath's other son, Rory, is an auctioneer. The even batches of steers are popular with buyers and very satisfying from the Liveseys' point of view. Another advantage of a tight calving period, according to Rob, is that bullying is minimised because calves are all the same size.

Because Firth is a wet, heavy farm, all the cows are in-wintered from November until after they calve in April. They are straw bedded and fed a diet based on silage and urea-treated wheat with minerals. Rob said: "We are lucky here that we do not seem to have any trace element deficiencies and the cows are easy to keep healthy." The herd is in the high health herd scheme and vaccinated for BVD and Leptospirosis. It has also been Johnne's risk level one since 2010.

A compact calving period means that Rob and Iain have more heifers achieving their target weights at bulling, which gives them more mature replacements to select from.

The cows' mature weight averages around 680kg at a condition score of 3 to 3.5. Rob said: "I find that because the cows are so fertile and calve very easily, condition score is not as critical, and I like to keep them reasonably fit throughout the year."

Steer calves comfortably gain 1.2kg per day until weaning in November at 350kg and receive no creep feed, so this is a useful tool for Rob and Iain to analyse how well each cow is milking. Anything which cannot rear around half her own bodyweight will not be kept.

The Salers Breed Society started using Breedplan to record EBVs three years ago and the Firth herd is fully recorded. Rob said: "I think we have to do this as a breed and it should be seen as a useful tool, alongside visual assessment."

The key maternal characteristics are good fertility, early sexual maturity, good fleshing ability, milkiness, longevity and easy calving. The Liveseys get great satisfaction from running such a herd, where the cows can pretty well look after themselves and management is simple.✚



QMS has completely revised and updated its Guide to Suckler Herd Fertility Booklet. The publication is designed to help assess herd fertility and identify scope for improvement.

To request a free copy phone QMS on 0131 472 4040 or email info@qmscotland.co.uk.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

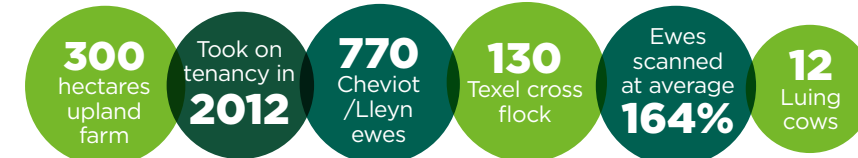
Becoming one of the new generation of QMS Monitor Farms has come at just the right time for start-up farming couple **Andrew and Aileen Marchant**, who admit they have spent the last five years with their noses to the grindstone, and only now are in a position to sit up and take stock of their position.



Clonhie is one of nine monitor farms that have been established across Scotland as part of the new Monitor Farm Programme managed jointly by QMS and AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds.

For more information about Clonhie and the other monitor farms, visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/monitorfarms

Clonhie Farm



Andrew, formerly the manager of a dairy and beef unit in Castle Douglas, and his wife Aileen took the brave step of starting farming in their own right by successfully applying for the tenancy of the 93-hectare Clonhie Farm, near Thornhill, from the Buccleuch Estate.

With no single farm payment and only 12 ewes to their name when they first came to Clonhie in 2012, the young couple, who have two children, William (6) and Anna (4), have at times relied on income from Aileen's teaching career and Andrew working off-farm. However, they have worked hard to build their flock up to 900 ewes and have started a small herd of 12 Luing cows.

Andrew said: "I feel I am now ready for the next challenge, and our business will be stronger and more resilient by the end of the monitor farm process."

Clonhie is all LEA, but Andrew describes it as good upland grazing - although he said it was not in great shape when they took over, needing lime, phosphate and potash. He said: "Initially, we had to concentrate all our resources on getting stock numbers up so we could create an income and make the business viable."

Last year, Aileen and Andrew took on the tenancy of a further 134 hectares and also received their first BPS payment. The extra land has meant a continued focus on increasing stock numbers, but now with more emphasis on improving soil fertility so that stock numbers can be increased to 1,200 ewes and 40 suckler cows over the next couple of years.

A stock of Lleyn ewes provided the foundation of the sheep flock and North Country Cheviot ewes were then added, with Lleyn tups being used and all ewe lambs kept for replacements. This year, however, the Cheviot flock is lambing to an Aberfield sire, while the cross ewes were put to Texel or Beltex sires.

Andrew said: "We have had to invest heavily in the flock due to health issues (mainly feet problems and high

mortality rates) which have arisen through keeping females which we would not normally keep. However, the home-bred ewes are doing well and the plan now is to close the flock and be more selective in our replacements."

Around 130 Texel cross ewes tugged by a Charollais, lamb in early March, with the remainder of the flock lambing outdoors in April. Scanning this year was 164%, but the target is to improve this to 175% over the whole flock.



Andrew said: "We lamb early to help the cash flow, but one of the debates at our monitor farm meeting was whether this enterprise is worthwhile, so I am recording everything from inputs to mortality, and we will make a decision in the summer about whether to lamb early again."

"We must develop our business in a way which is going to be best able to ride out the tough times and flourish in the good ones."

Last year 85% of lambs were finished, mostly off grass. Those not away by November were fed concentrates with the last of them marketed by March. The remaining 15% were sold store in September and did well, so selling a bigger proportion store in the future is an option. Andrew is prepared to be fairly versatile about selling lambs and reckons he is lucky that the farm can grow enough grass to finish them all if necessary.

A cattle-wintering enterprise has helped improve the grassland on the farm, with one cut of silage taken from about 25 hectares providing aftermath for finishing lambs - plus the slurry and dung have helped fertility. The next steps being considered to improve grassland management are to start to rest grass over winter and to introduce rotational grazing.

Andrew said: "No one in this area has grass from January until lambing, so we need to find ways of getting ewes through the winter cheaply. We are planning to sow turnips and kale this year so we can rest the grass; we will winter one batch of ewes on this and one batch on deferred grazing, and compare the results."

Andrew feels that being a monitor farmer will be massively beneficial, especially in the face of Brexit, which he admits he is very worried about, especially for the sheep industry. He said: "We can assume another two to three years of BPS, and I believe we have to use this to get our house in order; get fertility levels and genetics right, and be in a position to survive without subsidy."

The Marchants are probably better placed than most, as they have already experienced four years of farming without payments. Andrew said: "We have had to look at farming from a different perspective, as we have had no safety net. We had to make money or we were gone. But I like a challenge; I want to know exactly how much it costs to produce a kilo of lamb, so I am able to make informed decisions leading to improved productivity and efficiency."

Andrew recently spoke at a Holyrood Parliamentary Reception, where he said: "We must develop our business in a way which is going to be best able to ride out the tough times and flourish in the good ones. There are going to be opportunities that arise from issues such as Brexit and Land Reform, and we want to put ourselves on the best possible footing to capitalise on them. We like what QMS do and believe that the 'Scotch' brand has a big part to play in our farming future."+

Paddock Grazing Pays Dividends

Nuffield scholar **Robert Fleming**, from Castle Sinniness, Glenluce, brought the drive and enthusiasm he gained from completing his scholarship in 2015 back to his home farm, and in two years he has transformed his cattle system.

The 240 hectares, split among three farms but run as one business in partnership with his dad, John, and mum, Rachael, supports 260 pedigree Aberdeen-Angus and Angus cross cows as well as a flock of 65 Roussin sheep.

Robert's Nuffield title was "Efficiency Gains Through Improved Beef Genetics". However, he agrees wholeheartedly with a statement from New Zealand consultant Trevor Cook at a recent QMS Grazing Group conference suggesting that genetics are the blueprint for potential but mean nothing if the management is not right. Robert added: "We have got everything we need in the UK for a strong beef industry, we just need to use it better."

The catalyst to inspire change on the Flemings' South Milton farm was being asked to be the UK's first forage "ifarm" for Agrii in January 2015 and this is when Robert began to dabble in paddock grazing on one of

the units. Since then, he has adopted the system across the whole farm, gradually bringing in a larger area each year. Robert regularly attended the QMS South West Grazing Group meetings and found them especially useful for technical details such as knowing how much residual grass to leave at certain times of year.



He said: "The most important aspect has been analysing the soil and getting the pH, phosphate, potash and magnesium right over the farm. This has improved the grass growth by 25% while reducing the amount of nitrogen applied by 50%."

Having optimised grass growth, Robert's focus is firmly on the amount of dry matter of pasture which can be converted to kg of beef and the amount of kg of beef which can be produced per hectare.

At his Mains of Park unit, six hectares of rotational grazing was divided into paddocks from which Robert achieved production of over 3,000kg liveweight per hectare with young stock in a 260-day period last year with no supplementary feeding whatsoever. Robert plans to increase the paddock system further across more of the farm each year, using the improved profits to develop fencing and water infrastructure. This will allow him to retain more home-bred heifers and increase stock numbers.

He said: "The aim is to minimise what comes in on wheels and maximise what goes out in kgs."

The breeding herd is closed and calves from 1st April for nine weeks, with cows in-wintered on home-grown silage and turned out to calve. Heifers are out-wintered and brought in to calve. Robert explained that after calving, the cows are set-stocked until the oldest calves are two weeks old then shifted into paddocks designed for 45-cow batches, with fibreglass posts and polywire connected to the mains. They are moved every week until the calves are eight weeks old, then twice a week.

The previous year's calves were only housed for 58 days last winter, which is one of Robert's key targets. They are fed home-grown silage, wholecrop and lucerne with no concentrates. He said: "Three years ago calves were housed for 180 days over the winter and our concentrate feed bill was £30,000. Last winter it was zero!"

Once turned out in February, the youngstock are split into batches of 65 and rotated twice a week round two-hectare paddocks and Robert said: "The first 21 days the calves are out their weight gain is 0.75kg liveweight per day, which is the same as they do in the shed but at one quarter of the cost."

From spring through to summer the calves are weighed every three weeks and average daily gains of 1.55kg liveweight.

As many steers as possible are sold deadweight at around 550kg. The remainder, and the heifers not retained for breeding, are sold as stores at 15 to 17 months. Robert explained: "We used to sell calves at 12 months so our average kg of liveweight per hectare across the whole farm was 500, but by keeping calves to heavier weights and carrying more stock, we have already increased this average figure to 730kg per hectare."

Cow numbers have increased by about 30, but in order to utilise all the grass on the three farms which make up the unit, he has entered into contract grazing arrangements with two farmers for this season.

His own herd is high health, BVD and John's accredited, so over the winter he has put a paddock system in place on one of the farms specifically for the contract stores, to keep them separate.



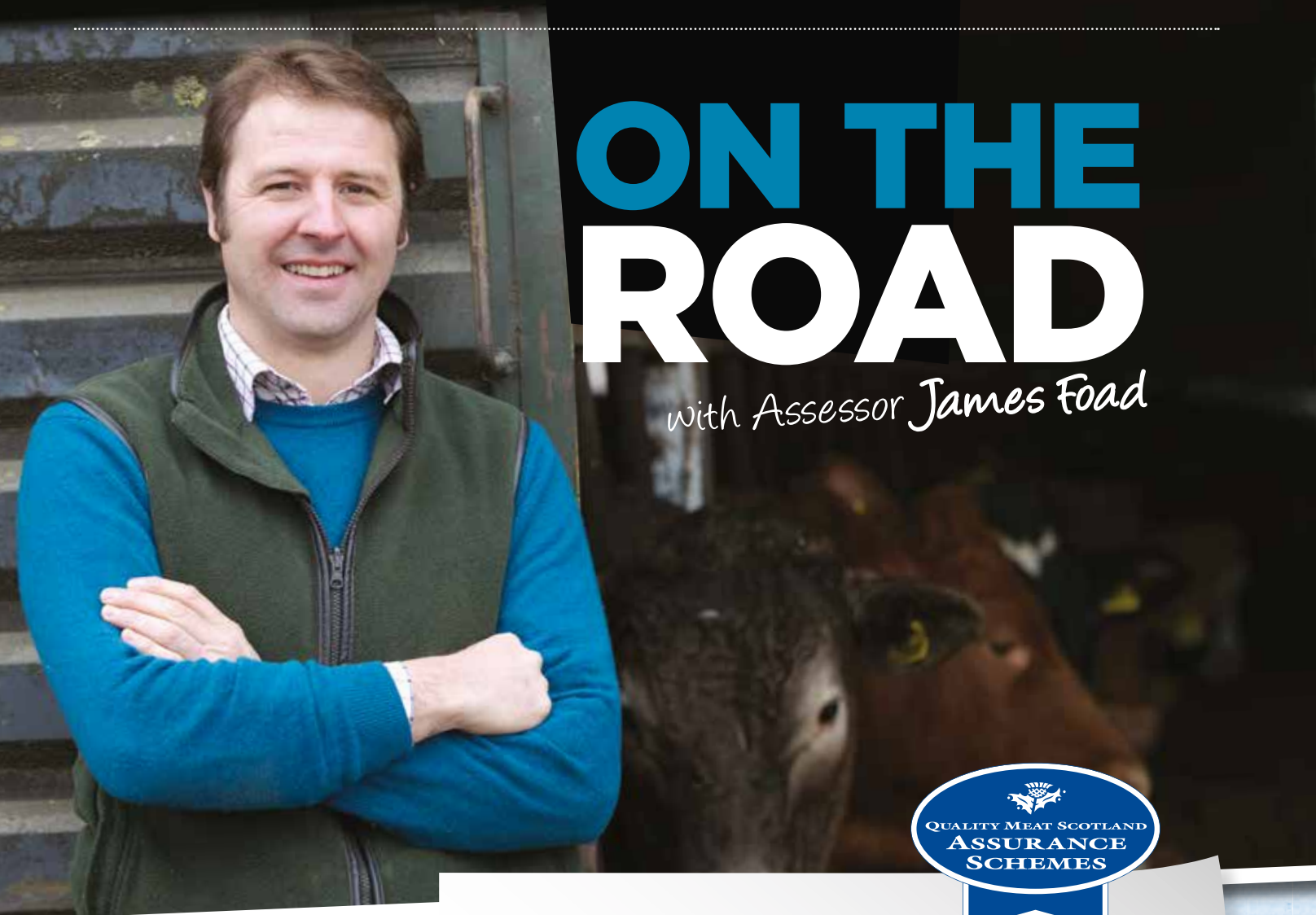
"Three years ago calves were housed for 180 days over the winter and our concentrate feed bill was £30,000. Last winter it was zero!"

The weaned calves arrive any time from the 1st of January onwards and are put into groups in paddock grazing systems as soon as possible. Groups are moved twice weekly around the seven, one-hectare paddocks. The owner can remove them whenever he wants; any surplus grass will be baled as silage. Robert said: "The grazing contract agreement is based on payment per kg of liveweight gain, which means that the better the cattle perform, the better for both me and the owner."

Robert is very excited about the future potential of his farm. Situated in the south west of Scotland and ranging from sea level to 65 metres, it already benefits from a long grass-growing season, but by getting the soil fertility right and managing the grazing, he does not see why he should not achieve his five-year plan of producing 3,000kg of liveweight from at least 200 of the 240 hectares. ✚



For more information about the recent QMS Grazing Conferences and how to improve grassland management on your farm, visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/better-grazing-better-business



ON THE ROAD

with Assessor James Foad



Around 50 quality assurance assessors visit sheep, cattle and pig farms throughout Scotland to ensure they meet the standards required to be members of the Quality Meat Scotland assurance schemes.

The experienced team of assessors work on a self-employed basis for Acoura, the independent contractor for the QMS whole chain assurance programme. Many also visit markets, hauliers and processors as part of their remit.

Among them is James Foad who we caught up with during a recent farm visit to get an insight into what it is like to be out on the road doing this important role, which underpins the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands.

What exactly is your role with Acoura? I am a quality assurance assessor visiting cattle, sheep and pig farms in an area stretching from St Andrews to the Black Isle.

What training is required to be an assessor? Acoura provide training on general assessing skills and there is also scheme-specific training. For example, I have recently undertaken additional training on assessing pig farms.

Do you have a farming background? Yes, I was brought up on a farm – originally in the south of England before we moved to Aberdeenshire in the 80s and I went to agricultural college.

Are you still involved? Yes, my wife Jane and I bought a farm five years ago, and we grow malting barley and run 350 breeding ewes. My role as an assessor fits well with running the farm business at home.

Do you enjoy being an assessor? Very much so. It's a job with lots of variety – no two farms are the same and no two farmers are the same. My role is to assess farms but I am not trying to catch people out. I understand the practical realities involved, and it is a pleasure to visit farms which are clearly run with so much pride and commitment. It's also great to be part of such a supportive, diverse and experienced assessor team and I hope most farmers enjoy having us on their farms.

What do you encourage farmers to do before you visit? I call to arrange the visit and chat through what they should expect. I encourage them to refresh their minds on the current standards document and to go through the assessment check list. These are available online if they cannot find their printed document.

Any particular areas you flag up? The key areas I might mention include ensuring livestock movement and medicine records are up-to-date. QMS has produced handy templates which members can use – for example there is an Animal Health Plan template.

How do you ensure you maintain good biosecurity? As assessors it is very important we don't spread disease. My wellies are always clean and I disinfect between each farm. Before I visit a pig farm I always check how many pig-free days I need to have before arriving on-farm.

How many farms do you visit each day? That varies depending on the time of year. In the winter, lack of daylight means I might only manage one visit in the morning and one in the afternoon, but when the days are longer I can usually manage three. The visits typically last 2–2.5 hours.

The bigger the farm, the longer the visit? Not necessarily. The complexity of the farm business is usually what determines the length of time required.

How good is the animal welfare on most of the farms you visit? On most farms, animal welfare standards are very good. It is very rare to have animal welfare non-compliances and in fact, in many cases the farmers look after their animals better than themselves.

In what way? I think loneliness is a real problem in farming now – and we see a lot of farmers in their 70s, who have lost their spouses, for whom life is pretty isolated. Some farmers have very little support.

How often will you be joined by a Scottish SPCA inspector? I'll regularly do joint visits to pig farms with the Scottish SPCA, and I also do about six joint visits a year to sheep and cattle farms. In my experience farmers are happy to have the Scottish SPCA visit. In fact, my only challenge is that it can make the visit longer as farmers are generally very interested to hear from the inspectors about the valuable work of the Scottish SPCA and show off their stock!

What are the most common non-compliances you find? Farm appearance is one area where members can sometimes fail to meet the standards. If there are materials



lying around which could cause injury to people or animals, that will be a problem. However, when pointed out by an assessor with a fresh pair of eyes, the farmer generally agrees and it is simple to rectify. Medicine records, including antibiotic collation, can be another problem area – typically the farmer will have everything recorded somewhere but has just failed to update the main medicine record. Again, this is easily rectified.

What happens when a non-compliance is raised? Any action required is noted on the visit record and a document is left behind detailing the next steps. Members have 30 days to rectify their non-compliances or they risk being withdrawn from the scheme.



Any frustrations in the job?

Something farmers really need to understand better is that it is essential they notify Acoura of the CPH numbers of any land or buildings they rent out with their core farm business. Failure to do that could result in their animals not being eligible for the Scotch brand. All that's involved is a couple of minutes to make that phone call, but getting this message over is proving a bit of a battle.

How useful are farmers finding the on-line Scotch Potential Eligibility Cattle Checker (SPECC)? The vast majority of cattle farmers I visit are using the SPECC checker and finding it a useful tool – particularly those who want to ensure the cattle they buy are eligible for the Scotch Beef label.

Around 25% of farmers are believed to have some degree of dyslexia – how much of a problem do you believe this is? We do see a lot of dyslexia, and it is something we look for ways to help with. From a personal perspective, several of my family members have dyslexia – so I am very aware of the challenges.

What do you think are the main benefits of being in the assurance schemes for cattle, sheep and pig farmers? Obviously the price differential is one benefit, but the assurance assessment process is also viewed by many farmers as a valuable farm “MOT” opportunity. There is also the potential for joint assessments to be carried out with other schemes for example, Scottish Quality Crops, saving members time and money.

There must be a lot of variety in the job? Yes, that is true. I meet so many different characters and I take a pride in the part I play as a brand ambassador for the whole-chain assurance programme. It is a privilege to gain an insight into the way many farmers run their businesses.+

For more information about the QMS Whole Chain Assurance programme, visit: www.qmscotland.co.uk/assurance-and-licensing

Opportunities for new entrants to the Scottish Pig Industry

Historically pigs were a way into farming for new entrants and it seems that this may once again be the case.



Andy McGowan, chief executive of the marketing co-op Scottish Pig Producers Ltd (SPP Ltd), believes that the sector is attractive and is keen to encourage both existing livestock farmers and new entrants to consider pig production.

A pig enterprise can be extremely productive while using little land and there is a new dimension – Scotland once again has a demand for finished pigs and it is not being met.

“Put simply we are short of pigs. The new abattoir at Brechin can now process around 8,000 pigs per week, and we are running around 1,000 to 1,500 pigs below capacity,” said Andy. The plant at Brechin is operated by Quality Pork Ltd, a joint venture between SPP Ltd, fellow marketing group Scotlean and processing company Tulip UK Ltd.

He continued: “Having this modern facility changes the model for pig production in Scotland. In past years, the way into pigs has been by providing ‘bed and breakfast’ to take weaners up to finishing weight, but now there are not enough weaners available to supply the needs of someone wanting to finish 500 to 1,000 pigs per batch.

Andy had some advice for anyone thinking of starting to breed pigs: “Farmers should look at the sheds they may have around the farm, or any concrete pads they may have, and think how they could use that as a basis for housing a breeding herd. The strawed yard could be converted into dry sow accommodation, and concrete pads could be used as a base for prefabricated, ready-to-use farrowing rooms.”

Existing farmers and new entrants have in recent decades been wary of making such a move because of worries over price volatility and the notorious “pig cycle” of boom and bust. Andy believes this is less of a concern now, because the pig sector should be less affected by Brexit than some others. “The fact that there is no CAP support for pig production means that volatility and global competition are nothing new for us. The forecasts for pig prices are also buoyant over the next year or two. We are competitive in export markets and that is keeping demand strong” he said.

There is also the well-established collaborative nature of the Scottish industry to consider.

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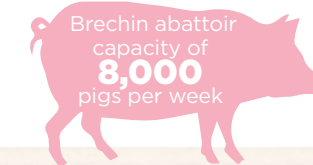
SPP Ltd, which is based in Huntly, has 60 pig farmer members in Scotland, plus a further 40 in Northern Ireland, and markets around 500,000 pigs per year. Amongst the membership there are those willing to act as mentors to new entrants, be they existing farmers or those looking for a way into the industry.

Scale need not be a problem, although Andy considers 100 sows producing 50 pigs per week to be about the minimum for a full-time unit. However SPP Ltd does have members with 50 sows, which suits people with other enterprises or off-farm employment.

Many units in Scotland now run 300–350 sows, which gives them the advantage of being able to supply a lorry load of 190–200 finished pigs per week. There is enough flexibility within the system, however, for SPP Ltd to arrange for smaller consignments to be collected in shared loads.

The major consideration for people thinking about setting up a breeding herd, is whether to opt for indoor or outdoor production.

Scottish Pig Industry: Key facts at a glance



Both have their merits, but Andy warns that costs of running an outdoor pig unit can be high in terms of labour and lower productivity, and that this should be countered by having all the certifications in place to receive a premium. The equipment costs are, however, lower for outdoor production as long as suitably free-draining land can be found.

In both outdoor and indoor systems, share farming or contract farming opportunities are being developed and can work well. “This is particularly the case where someone with good facilities is nearing retirement. Rather than close the unit, with all the loss of capital value, it might make sense to come to an agreement with a new entrant,” added Andy. Apart from anything else, using an already developed set of buildings can be much easier than trying to get planning permission on a green-field site.

The capital cost of a move into highly efficient indoor production depends on the level of sophistication involved, but industry sources put it around £2,500 per sow place for a system producing 7kg weaners. Young pigs of that size can then move into straw-bedded yards, given sufficient care and plenty of bedding.

Dung and slurry disposal might be seen as a problem for those without land, but these by-products have an increasingly appreciated value as fertilisers – making them a saleable proposition.

Andy points to an industry with good back-up. There are specialist pig vets around the country and Wholesome Pigs (Scotland), an industry-led health initiative, provides a unique service. Based at the SPP Ltd offices in Huntly, managed by Gordon McKen, this not-for-profit organisation performs a useful role for the whole Scottish pig industry.

It amasses abattoir data for feedback to producers and encourages membership of a health charter that enables data sharing between different businesses. The information gained allows for an industry-wide view of the health status of the Scottish pig herd and is one of the five components of the Scottish Pig Health Scheme (SPHS), which was set up by QMS to improve on-farm production efficiency, animal health and welfare.

All in all, it looks as if the Scottish pig sector is now offering real opportunities for those willing to grasp them.✚



Provenance, trust & integrity

Suzie Carlaw, QMS Marketing Controller, gives us an update on the latest Scotch Beef campaign.

It's been an exciting year for Scotch Beef PGI, with eye-catching campaigns engaging key consumers throughout Great Britain, with a focus on Greater London, the home counties and Scotland.

There continues to be a focus on raising awareness of Scotch Beef PGI so the consumer understands what the Scotch Beef PGI logo means and trust in the brand continues to grow from strength to strength. Ninety-three per cent of our target market in Scotland recognise the Scotch Beef PGI logo and 42% in Greater London and the home counties. Another important element is how many people believe that they can trust the Scotch Beef brand: over 87% in Scotland and 63% in Greater London and the home counties.

Consumers appreciate that a lot of work takes place behind the scenes to make sure that the Scotch Beef they buy from the retailer (whether it's an independent butcher, farmers' market or multiple retailer) is the genuine product. They place their trust in the blue logo, expecting, quite rightly, that independent checks are undertaken with regards to traceability, animal welfare and whole life assurance.

All of this led to a successful year in retail sales for the brand, with volume sales of identified Scottish origin beef increasing by 18.3% in 2016; critically, this has been driven by an increase in the number of households buying the product. It is worth noting, however, that the cuts that are quick and easy to cook have outperformed others; steaks, for example, experienced an 18.7% volume increase and mince has increased by 21%.

In comparison, roasting joints increased by almost 4%. This is why, during the latest campaign, many of the executions have been focused around roasting joints.

QMS, who promote the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands, work closely with the industry and, after advice from the Scotch Beef Marketing Strategy Group, the main campaign ran until the end of April this year.

This has allowed us to focus on Mother's Day and Easter celebrations. The perfect cut for these family celebrations is, of course, a Scotch Beef roast. The campaign, which ran for eight weeks, aimed to highlight some of the key elements behind the Scotch Beef PGI brand to consumers, such as the provenance, traceability, trust and integrity of the product. With more and more consumers interested in where their food comes from, this campaign was perfectly timed to inform, educate and inspire people to use Scotch Beef in their cooking repertoire.

The campaign featured on 451 poster sites across central London and the home counties, focusing on areas such as multiple retailers and commuter belt transport hubs. In addition, we advertised in magazines and newspapers such as *Good Housekeeping*, *The Observer Magazine*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Telegraph*.

Digital advertising, of course, continues to be an area we are keen to be active in, as many people now search for recipe inspiration online. Our digital adverts target shoppers who are interested in

food, recipes and the provenance of where their food comes from. With over 80,000 unique visitors using our website scotchkitchen.com over the last three months, it's clear there is an appetite for inspiration and top tips!

There is also a free cooking app available to download from both the Apple and Google Play stores called "Perfect Steaks and Roasts". Last year, over 40,000 people used the app to help them cook their perfect steaks and roasts – it's a sure-fire way of making sure you cook your dish to perfection.

Independent Retailers also supported the campaign and over 300 butchers across GB received a promotional pack to encourage the sale of Scotch Beef steaks, by communicating the variety and versatility of the different steaks available.

In addition, the kit featured a series of step-by-step steak sauce recipe cards which include easy steps to make sure consumers can produce the perfect sauce to complement their Scotch Beef steak time and time again. 🍴



WHAT IS PGI?



The PGI logo is your guarantee of an authentic product. Since 1996, Scotch Beef has held the coveted European PGI status, which legally protects it from imitation by meat from outwith Scotland or from products claiming Scotch status.

The PGI scheme protects food with a specific heritage.





THERE'S BEEF.
THERE'S SCOTTISH BEEF.
THEN THERE'S **SCOTCH BEEF.**

Find out why it's better at scotchbeefkitchen.com

