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AUTUMN 2017

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MONITOR FARM KEEN TO DEVELOP
A SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS

NEW IDEAS PUT INTO PRACTICE
ON ANGUS MONITOR FARM

CARCASE CLASSIFICATION – FUTURE

FEATURES

**Borders Farm Benefits
from Clean Grazing System**

**Successful Move into Pigs
for Morayshire Family**

**Low-cost High-output
System Works Wonders**

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case studies...
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MONITOR FARMS • PARASITE CONTROL • GRAZING MANAGEMENT • SUCCESSFUL MOVE INTO PIGS

SCOTCH BEEF FARM OF THE YEAR AND SCOTTISH SHEEP FARM OF THE YEAR AWARDS

**NOW OPEN
FOR ENTRIES!**



"These awards are a great way to build confidence in the future for all those working in the Scottish red meat industry."
Robert Parker of Drumdow Farm,
2016 Agriscot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year



"I would definitely encourage farmers to apply for either of these awards, and play a part in raising awareness of the top quality beef and lamb produced in Scotland."
Graham Lofthouse of Bankhouse Farm,
2016 AgriScot Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year

QMS, AgriScot and Thorntons are looking for entries and nominations for the 2017 AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year and Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year awards.

The application process is simple and the winners will play a valuable role in raising the profile of the commitment and care behind the production of Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI.

To enter, nominate a farm or find out more email info@qmscotland.co.uk



From left to right: 2015 winners - The Watson family from Darnford Farm, Aberdeen and Joyce Campbell from Armadale Farm, Sutherland.



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

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Issue 13, Autumn 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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WELCOME

Our new Chief Executive, Alan Clarke, is quickly settling into the role following Uel Morton's decision to step down after 11 years at the helm of QMS.

A warm welcome to Alan, who I look forward to working closely with in the weeks and months ahead. Alan and I have already made several industry visits, with many more planned before the end of the year.

While uncertainty surrounding the shape of our future markets, labour force, support payments and grant access seems to increase day by day, the reality in recent months is a largely positive story throughout the red meat sector. One of the central challenges for processors remains access to the required livestock numbers, while the continued weak pound is helping support prices at farm level.

QMS has produced briefing papers outlining the Brexit challenges as we see them. Clearly, access to markets is a key issue which will take a long time to sort out, and the likelihood is that current and emerging trade deals struck between the EU and third countries – such as Japan and the USA – will not simply carry over to a UK outside Europe.

It is encouraging to see this issue and others relating to trade in agricultural products now featuring in mainstream media reporting, as the penny starts to drop that the terms "agricultural products" and "food" are more or less interchangeable.

It is also encouraging that the UK Government now recognises the importance of non-UK workers across our economy, in particular in the food production and processing sectors.

In terms of grants, QMS has been the recipient of several hundred thousands of euros annually for many years, with much of this cash being used for promotional activity behind the industry's brands.

The much-heralded "Brexit Dividend" (the total amount of cash the UK will save annually after we cease paying into the EU) – about which we have heard very little since the referendum last June – must be used to maintain and enhance grants of this nature in a bid to grow new markets and improve existing ones.

I remain optimistic about our future prospects, and confident that common sense will prevail when it comes to looking after our nation's home-produced food supply and all that it stands for.+

Jim McLaren,
Chairman, Quality Meat Scotland

Front cover image: Jason and Victoria Ballantyne at Clynelish, the Sutherland Monitor Farm near Brora.

Chief Executive's Message



During the initial weeks since taking over the reins as Chief Executive of QMS, I have been struck by the passion, pride and professionalism of the people working in the Scottish red meat chain.

I have effectively moved from "cake to steak" as my previous role was Chief Executive of Scottish Bakers, which has strong links with the red meat industry.

I am very much looking forward to working with an industry which is at the heart of Scotland's excellent larder, with brands which are renowned for quality around the world.

In my first weeks, I have made it a priority to get out and about to meet people who work in each part of the industry – from farmers to processors, butchers and cutting plants, along with other key stakeholders. I have a huge amount to learn about this industry, and I am very much in "listening mode".

I have been very impressed with the knowledge, dedication and commitment of the QMS team – both the board and staff. My predecessor, 'Uel Morton, has left QMS well placed to continue to rise to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

One benefit of coming from a very different background, of course, is that I can look at the industry with a "fresh pair of eyes", and my experience in the Scottish food and drink sector has given me a broad insight into this area.

I believe that this, combined with our team of industry specialists, who strive every day to support, protect and promote our industry, makes for a very strong team, and we will continue to deal with the heavy workload and conflicting deadlines, which makes it an exciting place to work.

We live in interesting times and in the current climate there are many uncertainties, but the red meat industry has tackled many challenges before and QMS is well placed to work with the industry to make the most of the opportunities which also lie ahead.

I look forward to meeting many of you in the coming months and years. As ever, our door is always open.✚

Alan Clarke

Alan Clarke
Chief Executive,
Quality Meat Scotland

Weather Presenters Bring Sunshine to Highland Show

Two of Scotland's top weather presenters, working for rival television channels, took part in a lively charity cook-off as one of the many activities on the QMS stand at the Royal Highland Show this year.



The BBC's Judith Ralston took on STV's Sean Batty in a brilliant 40 minutes of witty exchanges and cooking which even included an impromptu song from former opera singer Judith.

The pair were challenged to come up with two delicious summer dishes, including Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI, from a bag of mystery ingredients.

Judge Jak O'Donnell of Glasgow's The Sisters Restaurants judged Judith's Scotch Beef Mexican Surprise to be the winner, in a close-fought battle with much good-natured rivalry and banter between the pair.✚



Scotch Lamb PGI Campaign Set to Reach Nearly Four Million Scottish Shoppers

A high-impact advertising campaign behind Scotch Lamb PGI is running again this year from the middle of August until the end of October.



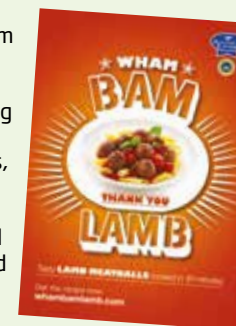
The 2017 Scotch Lamb PGI campaign – set to reach over 89% of adults in Scotland – will build on last year's campaign, highlighting to consumers that Scotch Lamb is a delicious hero ingredient that can be used to make quick, easy, versatile meals in under 30 minutes.

This year's "Wham Bam Lamb" campaign will feature online and in-store activity including almost 100 days of sampling in Morrisons, Aldi and Costco. The 10-week campaign will also be supported by billboard, press and radio advertising.

In addition, recipe leaflets and other point-of-sale materials will be distributed to several hundred butchers, who are members of the Scotch Butchers Club run by QMS.



Facebook Twitter @ScotchKitchen
www.scotchkitchen.com



QMS will also continue to inspire shoppers with tempting recipe ideas and videos placed throughout "The Scotch Kitchen" social media channels on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Suzie Carlaw, QMS Marketing Controller, said: "The target audience for the campaign is very much young professionals and busy working parents, with the key message that lamb is not just for roasting at the weekend – it can also make a quick, nutritious mid-week meal for all ages to enjoy.✚



Branded T-shirts Raise Over £6,000 for Charity

Thank you to everyone who donated £2 for one of QMS's brightly coloured Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork branded t-shirts at this year's Royal Highland Show. Over £6,000 has been raised for the STV Children's Appeal, which helps children in every part of Scotland.✚



NEW POSTER HIGHLIGHTS PERFORMANCE TARGETS FOR SUCKLER HERDS

QMS has developed a new resource for cattle farmers to help ensure the nutritional requirements of suckler herds are met throughout the year.

Following on from the hugely popular ewe nutrition timeline poster, which QMS launched in 2015, the new cow nutrition timeline poster highlights target body condition scores throughout the year for cows in a pasture-based, spring-calving system with a 365 day calving interval.



It also identifies the periods of high nutritional demand (calving and peak lactation) and low nutritional demand (mid-pregnancy dry period) and emphasises the value in matching nutritional demand with grass supply to help keep costs low.✚

To order your free copy of the cow nutrition timeline poster and or the ewe nutrition timeline poster, phone QMS 0131 472 4040 or email info@qmscotland.co.uk

Search is on for Top Scottish Beef and Sheep Farms

Nominations are now being sought for two prestigious awards in Scotland: the AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year and AgriScot Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year.



The awards, which are supported by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), set out to find, and reward, Scottish farms which exemplify the best in beef cattle and sheep production.

Graham Lofthouse, from Bankhouse Farm near Stow, won AgriScot Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year in 2016. He said: "I would definitely encourage farmers to apply for either of these awards, to play a part in promoting Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb and help build confidence in the future for all those working in the Scottish red meat industry."

If you would like to apply - or nominate a farm - for either award, please email info@qmscotland.co.uk

Scotch Beef PGI in the Spotlight at Top London Awards



A host of top food writers from across the UK enjoyed top-quality Scotch Beef PGI canapés at a prestigious London awards ceremony in June.

The annual Guild of Food Writers Awards are one of the highest accolades in food media, and the event attracted over 350 food journalists, bloggers, writers and authors.

Scotch Beef PGI also supported the Innovation Award, which was won this year by Kalpna Woolf and the charity 91 Ways, which harnesses the power of food to bring cultures and communities together in Bristol - a city of 91 languages.

Later this year, Scotch Beef PGI will again feature on the menu of the coveted Observer Food Monthly Awards. The event celebrates great cooking, writing and photography, and will be attended by foodie enthusiasts and chefs from across the country.

YOUR OPINIONS MATTER!

We are always keen to hear your views on the Scottish livestock industry.

This year, we have moved away from our annual postal farmer survey to a new quicker, simpler online format.

We'd be grateful if you would answer a few quick questions which you'll find at www.qmscotland.co.uk

The Autumn 2017 survey questions try to gauge whether your confidence in your business and the Scottish livestock industry has changed compared to this time last year.



QMS Member Portal Now Live

QMS assurance scheme members can now benefit from a recently launched online membership service.

The new QMS Member Portal has been developed by Acoura, our certification provider. It offers scheme members with internet access an online service to check and update membership details, access relevant scheme information and upload farm assessment related documents and templates.

Features

- Update membership details, e.g. CPH numbers
- Access scheme information
- Download document templates
- View membership certificate and history
- View non-compliances and upload corrective actions

Benefits

- 24/7 secure access for members
- Quick and easy to use
- Saves time (no phone call/email)
- Saves postage costs

To find out more and to start using the QMS Member Portal, please register now at: <https://www.acoura.com/members>

Top Cyclist Supports "Do More with Pork" Campaign



Olympic Gold Medallist Callum Skinner was reunited with cyclists at his old club, Edinburgh Racers, recently, to share his love of cycling and encourage fellow Scots to "do more with pork".

Callum, who won gold in the Team Sprint at the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, was in Edinburgh to lend his support to the current campaign highlighting the versatility and simplicity of cooking with Specially Selected Pork.

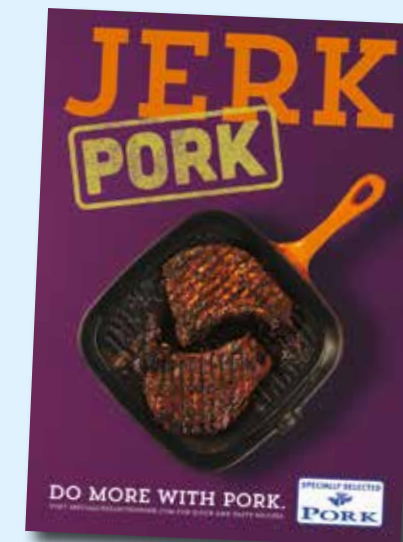
Speed is very much part of Callum's lifestyle, and during a day spent with QMS he also filmed a series of videos highlighting how quick and easy it is to create delicious meals in minutes, using pork.

Among his favourites to prepare, and eat, are Pork Tikka Kebabs and Jerk Pork Chops, both of which feature in the short videos.

"I enjoy experimenting with pork in different recipes. It's so versatile and it never gets boring, so you can create perfect mid-week meals in a matter of minutes," said Callum.

"My training schedule means I'm on the go a lot and I need to keep my energy up, but I don't have the time or patience to cook complicated recipes to fuel me. That's why I'm a big fan of pork - it's lean and packed full of nutrients to help provide the balanced diet I need to maintain my fitness."

The eight-week "do more with pork" campaign is set to reach over three million consumers and showcased the quality, affordability and versatility of Specially Selected Pork. The brand also has the benefit of being underpinned by quality assurance schemes which make animal welfare a priority.



The campaign also featured in-store sampling in Aldi stores and promotional recipe cards were placed in hundreds of Scotch Butchers Club shops across Scotland over the summer, as well as online activity and radio adverts.

Graeme Sharp, Marketing Executive at QMS, said: "It's fantastic to have high-profile athletes like Callum lending their support to our campaign.

"We are keen to encourage more and more people to continue experimenting with contemporary pork dishes, as it is a perfect meat for everything from slow cooking to a quick fuel fix.

"This year's campaign was very much about encouraging consumers to include pork regularly on their weekly shopping lists to create tasty, budget-friendly meals."

For more information about Specially Selected Pork and to try out Callum's recipes, visit www.speciallyselectedpork.com or follow "Enjoy Quality Pork" on Facebook.



New Team Member for QMS

QMS has appointed Mairi Sutherland as its new Health and Education Executive.

With a degree in Sport and Exercise Science from Edinburgh Napier University, Mairi has worked in a variety of sectors, with companies such as Virgin Active, Baillie Gifford and most recently The University of Edinburgh.

Carol McLaren, QMS Head of Communications, commented: "Mairi brings a huge amount of practical knowledge and experience with her. This, coupled with a strong personal interest in health and nutrition, will undoubtedly strengthen our existing communication activities to promote the role of red meat in a healthy diet."



New Report Highlights Key Trends in Scottish Red Meat Industry

The 2017 Scottish Red Meat Industry Profile is now available. The report draws together a wide range of information on the Scottish red meat sector and the trends over the last 12 months.

You can request a free copy by emailing info@qmscotland.co.uk, or you can download a copy from www.qmscotland.co.uk/publications

BENEFITING FROM CLEAN GRAZING

A clean-grazing policy to reduce worm burden is paying dividends on a Borders hill farm.

Charley Walker, who farms with his wife Andrea at Barnside, near Duns, has been able to develop a sustainable worm-control programme which keeps his anthelmintic use to a minimum.

The 250 hectare unit, which extends from 600 to 900 feet above sea level, runs 840 Easy Care ewes and 84 Welsh Black cows, which are put to Aberdeen-Angus bulls.

“Running a carefully planned clean-grazing system has allowed us to reduce our use of wormer, and hence our medication costs, along with cutting out the time involved with worming lambs.”

“Other clear benefits are the reduced risk of our flock developing anthelmintic resistance and the improvement in the performance of the stock in terms of growth rates,” said Charley.

“The clean-grazing system allows us to get all our lambs – born at the end of April/start of May – finished and off the farm by 1st November, with only a single anthelmintic treatment at weaning. We are looking at an average of 150 days to slaughter for the whole flock,” he added.

The Walkers’ regime sees them lambing ewes on pastures that carried sheep the previous summer and autumn before a change-over takes place in May.

“Running a carefully planned clean-grazing system has allowed us to reduce our use of wormer, and hence our medication costs, along with cutting out the time involved with worming lambs.”

At this time, ewes and lambs are moved to pasture which has had cattle on it for the previous 12 months.

“That way the lambs move to clean pasture and we get a really good run through to weaning, when our lambs get their one and only wormer drench. At weaning, the lambs are moved to silage aftermaths, either on this farm or on some locally rented pasture,” said Charley.

The key to the success of the clean-grazing system is the fact that cattle are on the pasture for a year. This, he said, means that the worms which are specific to sheep (with the exception of *Nematodirus*) cannot persist.

Clean Grazing - Aim

The aim of clean grazing is to ensure vulnerable sheep (lambs) are exposed to as few worms as possible by providing ‘clean’ grazing.

Worm larvae can survive on pastures for a few months, so giving pasture a break from grazing youngstock will reduce worm levels.

This break can be provided by reseeding, shutting off for hay or silage, or alternating grazing between cattle and sheep, as most of the worm species are host specific.

The longer the break, the better. Alternatively, mature dry ewes will have developed immunity to worms, and will not shed as many eggs as lambs, so can act as “hoovers” and reduce the burden to some degree.

Sampling dung through faecal egg counts will ensure clean-grazing objectives are on track.

Charley emphasised that even for shorter spells of under 12 months, the use of cattle – or silage or cropping – to clean up pasture will bring real benefits. He said there is evidence showing that growth rates can be 30% higher on a clean-grazing system compared with a system involving drenching for worms and dirty pastures.

As the Walkers have a good proportion of cattle in their livestock mix, they are able to alternate sheep and cattle grazing from one year to the next. However, they also use silage to clean ground for their sheep, and Charley maintains that those without cattle in their systems can make good use of crops and silage aftermath in a clean-grazing system.

“The key is to try to avoid putting ewes and lambs onto grass where weaned lambs have been the previous autumn, and to avoid putting weaned lambs where ewes and lambs have been in the spring and early summer,” said Charley.

He said farmers without cattle could also make the most of their dry stock, such as weaned ewes which typically shed many (not much) fewer eggs, by following dry stock in the spring with the highest-risk stock, e.g. triplets.

Keeping ewes with singles separate from multiples can also help. “Singles can graze more of the dirtier ground because they are less susceptible to worms and have a higher proportion of milk in their diet, which will help,” observed Charley.

Vet and med costs are now so low at Barnside that expert advisors who visit the farm regularly question the figures. However, Charley is adamant that the main benefit of not regularly drenching is, in fact, the amount of time he saves.

“We tend to undertake faecal egg counts from mid-June at regular three-week intervals to make sure we are not having any breakdowns right through to weaning,” said Charley.

Taking their grazing management to the next level, the Walkers’ clean-grazing approach now also works hand-in-hand with the rotational grazing system they have successfully established, which has seen them increase breeding stock numbers by 20%, and output by 30%.

“Our clean-grazing regime is a bit like chess but much simpler! We have our stock grazing plan well mapped out, and we are always planning a move ahead – I can tell you now where our ewes and lambs will be grazing for the next five years,” said Charley.

He suggested that farmers could test the benefits of clean grazing by starting out on a small scale.

“This could perhaps involve simply identifying a field or block that is carrying cattle this year and putting their ewes with twins, or perhaps the older ewes, onto that block to see how they perform without regular drenching,” he said.

The Walkers are 100% convinced about the benefits their clean-grazing system is delivering, coupled with the rotational grazing they have introduced.

“From a management point of view, it is great to be able to lamb our sheep and not to have to pester them again, aside from a single drench at weaning.

“I can’t imagine ever returning to a routine drenching system – the benefits of clean grazing are very clear on the farm here.”



QMS, in collaboration with AHDB Beef & Lamb and HCC, has developed a practical guide for farmers on controlling parasitic worms in sheep. To get your free copy please phone QMS on 0131 472 4040 or email info@qmscotland.co.uk

Clean Grazing - Key Benefits

- Reduced reliance on wormer, reducing risk of developing anthelmintic resistance
- Target growth rates achieved while managing the worm burden
- Pasture contamination kept low through planned management
- Cost savings through reduced use of wormers and reduced labour

Focus on Developing a Sustainable Business

Keeping costs under control is the main focus for Jason and Victoria Ballantyne at Clynelish, the Sutherland Monitor Farm near Brora.

The 125-hectare farm is rented from Diageo, which owns the neighbouring Clynelish Distillery. The couple, who farm in partnership with Jason's dad, Murdo, also have 32 hectares of seasonal grazing locally and contract farm 230 North Country Cheviot ewes - at a sheep stock club two miles away - which graze on 34 hectares of in-bye and hill.

Stock clubs are based on the communal benefits of managing sheep collectively via common grazings. They have existed for many decades and are traditionally most widely found in Skye and Lochalsh, as well as Sutherland.

The family have 670 ewes of their own and 75 suckler cows, including 11 heifers, and both enterprises are operated on low-cost forage systems. "It is essential to keep costs under control. We may not have the biggest and shapeliest lambs and calves, but we are keen that they return a profit," said Victoria.

Jason pointed out that they are particularly conscious of the fixed costs involved with cattle and are considering different wintering options, such as brassicas. He said: "We feel there is scope to reduce inputs by making changes to genetics and the management of the herd, and the Monitor Farm Programme should help us with that."

At the moment, the native cross cows are overwintered on straw and silage and calve over a nine-week period starting at the beginning of May, once lambing is well through. A Charolais and, more recently, a Stabiliser bull have been used and the plan is to retain some Stabiliser cross heifers. Jason said: "I like the commercial focus of the Stabiliser breed and the fact it promotes production from forage-based systems."

Recently, Jason and Victoria have been concentrating on bringing down the size of their cows, which now average 670 kg at maturity. They feel there is potential to reduce this further without any detrimental effect on the weaning weight of calves.

Calves have not been creep fed for three years, with no difference to their weaning weight of around 245 kg at five-and-a-half months. The couple are keen to reduce the check-in weight they see in their calves at weaning, so have taken some advice from both the monitor farm community and management groups to try a gentler weaning technique of forward-grazing calves this year.

"We feel there is scope to reduce inputs by making changes to genetics and the management of the herd, and the Monitor Farm Programme should help us with that."

Up until now, calves have been sold at nine-and-a-half months at Thainstone where, this year, they averaged 343 kg and 256p/kg. They are overwintered inside on silage, draff from the distillery and a little beet pulp and soya.

Victoria described this diet as "pretty affordable" and said that the average liveweight gain was 1.1 kg per day. However, they are open to suggestions from the monitor farm group and willing to try other options, including selling some calves at weaning.

The couple feel that cattle are an essential part of the business. Jason commented: "While we are aware of the fixed costs involved with cattle compared with sheep - such as housing, machinery for silage-making and so on - we are confident there will always be a demand for beef."

They are very aware that farming could be forced to adapt to different circumstances in the next few years. Victoria said: "We spend a lot of time round the kitchen table planning for the future. We are worried about losing the lamb export trade but also feel there could be opportunities, and for the last five or six years our focus has been on how we can change the business to weather the storm which could now be Brexit."

When they moved into the farmhouse in 2012, Victoria took over the running of the bed and breakfast from her mother-in-law, Jane. Clynelish farmhouse can take up to nine guests per night and bookings have rocketed since the promotion of the North Coast 500 route, which passes very close to the farm.

As maintaining a work-life balance is a crucial part of their business planning, for the last two years Jason and Victoria have taken on a couple for the summer to work both on the farm and in the house. This was how Victoria, who hails from Australia, originally met Jason - she came to help with the lambing in 2006 - and stayed!

The sheep at Clynelish are Lley cross North Country Cheviot ewes, and they are also on a low-cost, forage-based system. These are crossed with Aberfield, New Zealand Suffolk and Meatlinc rams to produce both replacements and store lambs, which are sold at Dingwall. They use a Shetland tup over the ewe lambs, which gives them an easy lambing, and Jason described the result as a "bonus lamb".

Their target scanning percentage for the ewes is 170% - this year it was 151%. Their first step in improving this is to push ewe lambs onto the best grass to achieve a 40 kg lamb by puberty. Following a suggestion from the monitor farm meeting, they are also going to test for Toxoplasmosis and leave the tups in for 25 days instead of 21.



They use Trevor Cook, a vet and sheep and beef production consultant from New Zealand, as a consultant for the sheep and plan to trial rotational wintering for the ewes this year, splitting much of the farm into 36 paddocks averaging two hectares, each of which they hope will last 100 days.

As far as they know, this will be the furthest north this approach has been tried, so it will be interesting for them and the Monitor Farm Programme to follow the trial and see the results.

Jason and Victoria already record and monitor everything they are doing on the farm. Unusually, they also cost their own time for each enterprise, so they have good knowledge of their costs.

However, they hope that being part of the Monitor Farm Programme over the next three years will enable them to see better what they are doing right and wrong, try out a few changes, draw comparisons and make their own business sustainable in the long-term.✚

Cattle Management at Clynelish

- 75 Simmental cross native cows
- Cows weigh around **670 kg** at maturity
- Cows are **outwintered** on straw and silage
- Calve in May** over a nine-week period
- Calves receive **no creep feed**
- Calves weaned at five-and-a-half months with average weight of **245 kg**
- Calves sold at nine-and-a-half months at Thainstone at **343 kg** and 256p/kg



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

PUTTING MONITOR FARM IDEAS INTO PRACTICE

Fresh ideas from a young farmer, combined with the knowledge and experience of experts, are already bringing changes to the Angus Monitor Farm.

Mill of Inverarity, near Forfar, is farmed by Robert and Alison Stodart along with their older son, Rory, who has only been full-time on the farm since February. Their younger son, Tom, is an apprentice mechanic but is responsible for the spraying and maintenance of machines on the farm. Daughter Vicky works off-farm, and a full-time tractorman is employed. Grandfather John Syme also helps during busy spells.

The home farm extends to 206 hectares, with a further 152-hectare farm owned nearby. About two-thirds of the farm is cropped with winter and spring cereals, oilseed rape and some land rented out for potatoes. The remainder is rotational grass which supports 200 suckler cows and 500 ewes, with additional summer grazing taken locally.



Rory Stodart now works full-time on the farm.



Robert and Alison Stodart pictured with sons Tom and Rory.

The sheep enterprise has increased dramatically in recent years, and Rory is particularly keen to see it expand further. He said: "It makes sense to expand the sheep enterprise, as it requires the least resources and makes better use of the land we have – and also our time."

Three years studying for a BSc in agriculture at Newcastle University, followed by a spell working on farms in Australia and New Zealand, have given Rory a clear vision of where improvements can be made on the farm and, with the support of his family and the monitor farm process, he intends to increase efficiency and profitability.

"It makes sense to expand the sheep enterprise, as it requires the least resources and makes better use of the land we have – and also our time."

Rory (22) has always been keen on sheep and was given six Texel cross ewes by his parents about 15 years ago. The flock, although getting slowly bigger, remained a hobby until three years ago, when numbers doubled to 200 then again to 400 in 2016. This year there are 500 ewes – half Texel cross and half Scotch Mules.

Rory explained: "We need to be scanning at 200% to make this work. The Texel and mule ewes complement each other. The Mules produce a bigger crop of lambs, while the Texels produce a butchers' lamb."

The lambs are all finished on farm and have previously all been sold through Forfar mart, although Rory reckons as numbers increase, he may sell a few deadweight. Last year they finished at 45 kg and the average price across the whole crop was £76 per head.

Both Robert and Rory feel that the arable land is under-utilised over the winter, when it lies in stubble, and are keen to investigate ways to utilise their land all year round.

The farm is, therefore, currently trialling eight different grass varieties sown under spring barley. Rory said: "This is one of the initiatives to come out of the monitor farm group, and we are hoping to find a variety which will provide cheap winter feed for sheep with no detrimental effect on our barley yields."

The family are also sowing some stubble turnips this year, and in mid-July they began sowing kale onto fallow land under the greening regulations. They hope that the extra winter fodder will increase the sheep stocking potential.

Rory has also been dabbling with rotational grazing and has already seen the benefits, especially because he can prioritise ewes and lambs while cleaning up with cattle.

The plan is to divide more fields into smaller paddocks, as the family are already seeing a saving in fertiliser costs.

Rory said: "This is the first year that our only fertiliser requirement has been 100kg/ha of 46% urea in March followed by 200kg/ha of 38% urea plus Sulphur in April. Normally we would be top dressing again in May and June."

Two cuts of silage are taken before aftermaths are fully utilised for finishing lambs and flushing ewes. This is the first year that sheep numbers have been so high, and Rory pointed out that it would be a bit of trial and error and that he expects to finish some lambs off brassicas. He said: "By next year I should have some useful cost-of-production figures, and being part of the Monitor Farm Programme will help me analyse costs and benchmark our business."

The cattle enterprise extends to 200 Limousin and Simmental cross suckler cows. These are split into spring and autumn calving, with all progeny finished and sold through either Forfar Mart or on the hook to McIntosh Donald.



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

Working in Australia taught Rory about making economies and efficiencies of scale, and he believes that the way forward at Mill of Inverarity is to have several enterprises of a reasonable size to make best use of resources and management time. A new enterprise just about to start at the farm is a 4,500-bird free-range layer unit, which should fit in well with the other elements of the business.

Running several complementary enterprises on the farm not only keeps the Stodart family busy, but also spreads the risk and offers security going forward into the unknown territory of Brexit and beyond.

The first two monitor farm meetings at Mill of Inverarity have attracted 100 and 80 people, respectively, and the Stodarts really appreciated receiving ideas and practical suggestions from other farmers. They are looking forward to the next two years, during which they hope to put more ideas into practice.✦

Mill of Inverarity Farm: At A Glance

206
hectares

A further 152-hectare
farm owned nearby

$\frac{2}{3}$
arable

$\frac{1}{3}$
grazing stock

200
Limousin and
Simmental cross
suckler cows

500
Texel Cross and
Scotch Mule ewes

Lambs finish at **45 kg** and sold at Forfar averaging **£76**.

Looking at **stubble crops** and **undersowing** to produce cheap winter feed.

LOW-COST HIGH-OUTPUT SYSTEM WORKS WONDERS

Alan Cowan believes that his farm has benefited from his contact with like-minded farmers as part of QMS's Grazing Group meetings.

Alan farms 170 hectares at Westerheugh, Stamfordham, in Northumberland in partnership with his wife, Esther. Previously a contractor, Alan managed to secure the tenancy of the lowland grass farm in 1999, and he and Esther have made it their priority to develop a low-cost, high-output system.

The main enterprise is a flock of 950 Mule and New Zealand Suffolk cross ewes, while he also runs 50 Limousin cross Holstein/Friesian suckler cows – mainly, he says, to clean up after the sheep. Effective use of grass and forage drive his system, while Alan believes the key to success is flexibility.



Lambs are supplemented with cobalt in order to help them reach their potential, while the ewes receive a cobalt, selenium, copper and iodine bolus pre-tupping. Dosing, however, is only carried out when a faecal egg count dictates, which can be just once a year, although ewes are fluke-dosed two or three times annually. Emily Grant of QMS, who co-ordinated the grazing groups, said that Alan's farm was amongst those with some of the lowest cost-of-production figures of any in the project. This is achieved by a low spend, but also the significant productivity. She said: "Alan's low-cost but high-output system makes maximum use of the resources available to him on the farm, namely grazed grass. He has a strong cost-control philosophy; not only must any spend generate a return, but also cost cutting mustn't damage production."

He said: "Since starting the rotational grazing system and outwintering cows in 2006, I have learned what is possible on my farm as well as what won't work. There are a lot of variables, not least the weather, but I like the flexibility of my rotational grazing system."

To start with he kept it simple by moving big batches of ewes around fields, but as he recognised the grass-growing potential of the farm, he fine-tuned his rotational grazing to allow him to outwinter his stock and drastically cut down on feed costs.

The entire ewe flock is winter grazed on 0.4 hectare paddocks and moved according to ground conditions. Alan explained: "In 2015/2016 it was very wet and we had to move them every day, but last winter was drier so they were only been moved every three days."

"Effective use of grass and forage drive his system, while Alan believes the key to success is flexibility."

Once a paddock has been grazed in November and December, it is given at least 100 days' rest without grazing to allow Alan to build enough grass cover for lambing.

The farm is quite exposed and lambing starts on 24th March, so if conditions are not suitable for outdoor lambing, Alan has the facility to house the ewes. He feeds 250 grams of protected soya, along with a little concentrate, once every three days from four weeks pre-lambing, so the ewes are used to eating something other than grass. If they are housed, they are supplemented with hay and 0.4 kg of ewe nuts per head per day. It also helps those carrying triplets, as the scanning at Westerheugh the last couple of years has been around 197%.

At the moment, he is using only 16 tonnes of concentrate a year in the sheep flock, but Alan said he is considering moving to later lambing to try to eliminate bought-in feed completely. The problem is that lambing would then coincide with calving, and he uses the sheds to bring cows inside to calve.

Ewes and lambs are rotated in paddocks until the lambs are weaned onto a red clover/ryegrass mix pasture, where they are all finished and sold before Christmas.

Alan said: "It is the little things which make a difference; I test the pH of the soil every three to four years, as there is no point in putting nitrogen on if the pH is not right, and I only apply small amounts of nitrogen strategically, anticipating when there is most pressure on the grass. Silage is basically a waste product of the rotational system, but last year the silage was 11ME and 13.5% protein, which saves buying in extra feed."

Wintering costs for the cattle are also kept low. The cows are outwintered on four hectares of kale, which then allows grass reseeding with a red clover/ryegrass ley.

Round-bale silage is positioned on the kale at harvest to supplement the cows' diet, and this saves time and handling costs. Alan said:

"One of the ways we have cut costs is to use less diesel: now we only use about 1,500 litres a year."

The herd is spring calving, and cows and calves clean up the paddocks behind the ewes and lambs. The calves are in-wintered on silage until the cows come in to calve, and then they go onto the remainder of the kale until the grass is ready for them in May, when they are rotated round eight one-hectare paddocks. They are sold as forward stores at 14 to 16 months.

As tenant farmers starting up out on their own, Alan and Esther have had to find a profitable, low-cost system and Alan said: "Attending the Grazing Group meetings has shown me that what I am doing is not wrong, and has convinced me that 'grazed grass' is the key to profitability." +



QMS has launched two new programmes for farmers in Scotland to improve their utilisation of Grass. The "Better Grazing" programme is aimed for those keen to learn more about improving their grazing management, while the "Graze+" project is more suitable for those livestock farmers who have already taken steps to improve their grassland management and are keen to progress further. For more information on either programme, contact QMS on 0131 472 4040 or visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/grazing

Successful Move Into Pigs For Nairnshire Family

A Nairnshire farming family have no regrets about their decision two years ago to introduce a pig herd to their sheep, cattle and arable enterprise.



The Forbes family, who farm 344 hectares based at Little Kildrummie near Nairn, have added a herd of 65 outdoor sows to their previous livestock enterprise of 130 suckler cows and 450 ewes.

With the outlook for the pig sector looking promising and good demand from processors for Scottish pigs, the family plan to further increase their pig numbers in the months ahead.

The farm business is run by Stephen Forbes in partnership with his wife Lynn, supported by their son, Gus.

The opportunity to start up a pig unit as part of their mixed enterprise came when a local farmer moved out of pigs, and the family have now established a herd of Large White x Landrace. It is the first time in the family's 90-year history on the farm that pigs have been part of their business mix.

The introduction of the pig enterprise has allowed the family to make better use of shed space which had previously been under-utilised and also makes good use of the cereals grown on the farm.

The introduction of the pig enterprise has allowed the family to make better use of shed space which had previously been under-utilised and also makes good use of the cereals grown on the farm.

"So far, the decision to move into pigs has definitely been a good one for us," said Stephen Forbes, who is grateful for the support of Pig Manager, Anthony Frank.

"Initially there was a very steep learning curve for us moving into pigs for the first time, particularly when it came to outdoor farrowing. However, we now have a good system in place and we have plans to increase our sow numbers further."

The sows are kept outdoors, with their offspring brought inside to be finished on straw courts. The finished pigs go mainly to Munro's abattoir in Dingwall, but the farm business has also successfully diversified into its own meat retail business.

This side of the enterprise is led by 25-year-old Gus Forbes, who is now focusing on further developing this successful growth area of the business.

"We started selling our own beef, lamb and pork - which is all quality assured under QMS's schemes - almost a decade ago and we haven't looked back," said Gus.

"Initially our focus was very much on local events and farmers' markets, and then five years ago we started our own butchery," he explained.

Gus is now a trained butcher, and around two years ago Forbes Farm Fresh launched its own online and catering business, including their incredibly popular hog roasts.

The meat retailing side of the business is booming, with online sales of Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork trebling in the past few years.

"At our busiest time of year, we can go through five pigs a week to meet demand, particularly for hog roasts for weddings and other events," Gus said.

The Forbes family are looking forward to continuing to grow their reputation as a supplier of top-quality beef, lamb and pork and see substantial potential to grow the meat retail side of their business.

"To date, our marketing strategy has been focused on growing our reputation via word of mouth, but we plan to look at developing this further in the coming months," he added.

"We are also looking forward to increasing the size of our pig herd over the next year. The pig herd is dovetailing well with our cattle, sheep and arable enterprises at this early stage. However, we are very much still in learning mode and we're aiming to keep improving the efficiency of what we are doing."

The meat retailing side of the business is booming, with online sales of Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork trebling in the past few years.





FUTURE OF CARCASE CLASSIFICATION UNDER REVIEW

By Stuart Ashworth,
QMS Head of Economics Services

The UK's departure from the EU offers a useful opportunity for the industry to reflect on whether the current EUROP grid, used to classify carcasses at abattoirs, is fit for purpose and consider potential alternatives.

QMS is involved in an ongoing industry consultation process which is looking carefully at the options available and we are urging all parts of the industry to engage in a constructive dialogue on the best way forward.

The future mechanism for evaluating carcasses is a hot topic in the press at the moment but in order to have an informed debate, a look back at the origins of the current system may be useful.

The Agriculture Act of 1947 introduced a fatstock guarantee scheme which required information on market prices so a deficiency payment (i.e. a direct support) could be paid to producers of products that met a certain standard. The visual assessment of whether an animal met the required standards became known as "grading".

In 1964, a UK Government inquiry recommended the establishment of an agency responsible for the design, introduction and operation of carcass classification schemes for cattle, sheep and pigs, along with the dissemination of live and deadweight prices to producers. The aim was to address what the inquiry described as 'poor market intelligence and almost non-existent price information'.

Accordingly, the Meat and Livestock Commission (MLC) was established, and a pig carcass classification scheme was introduced in 1972. This was followed by a beef scheme in 1974, with a sheep scheme following in 1975.

Across Europe similar developments took place, and the various national schemes set up finally came together when the European Commission established the Beef Classification Scheme, which introduced the EUROP grid, in 1981. This was done to deliver a core part of a market management process and became mandatory in 1992.

This meant that the European Commission had a common system of price reporting and allowed the introduction of Guide Prices and Intervention Prices, which were the triggers for the opening of private storage aid and intervention buying.

A similar regulation was introduced for sheep by the Commission in 1992; however, it remains voluntary.

Written feedback from people working in the industry on this issue would be welcomed by the three GB red meat levy bodies by mid-September 2017.

This glance at the history books highlights a fundamental issue relating to the purpose of price reporting and carcass grading.

Is it a mechanism to underpin agricultural support or to communicate information on market and consumer requirements? If it is the latter, does the system deliver in its current form?

In an unsupported industry, it could be argued there is no need for price reporting, so what information do we require? And is there a distinction to be made between "price reporting" and "quality of carcass" reporting?

Two key questions are what is "quality" and what elements of quality can be influenced by the producer, processor or even the person cooking the meat?

In theory, a better-quality carcass which delivers what the consumer wants should have more value than a poorer-quality carcass, but for a producer the maximum revenue may not come from the best "quality".

This is because the processor buys a whole carcass, and payment to the producer will be based on the meat yield of that carcass and how the balance of that carcass delivers revenue to the abattoir.

This means that an animal may yield a very high value steak, but the remainder of the carcass may not be so valuable in the markets.

If the main component of "quality" for a first buyer of prime stock is meat yield, then it could be argued the current system delivers the correct messages and information.

Carcass dissection work done by AHDB in 2011 does show that the EUROP grid reflects meat yield.

In some parts of the world, beef yield is estimated by applying a standard equation to measurements taken from the eye muscle. Depending on the result, the carcass is then placed into a category. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has five meat yield grades based on fat cover and rib eye area.

This meat yield factor may, or may not, be combined with what the USDA call a "quality grade" based on age (maturity), gender and the marbling, colour and firmness of the meat.

Two key questions are what is "quality" and what elements of quality can be influenced by the producer, processor or even the person cooking the meat?

Joint size may not be seen as an indication of quality by some, but if a consumer will not buy a joint because it is too big, a processor or retailer may have to heavily discount that product to gain a sale, irrespective of how good an eating experience the consumer could have. This suggests that perhaps price reporting and classifying against weight ranges is important.

For others, "quality" may mean tenderness, texture and eating quality. In this regard, marbling is often thought to be a quality measure, and some parts of the world make assessments of marbling when categorising carcasses.

Some abattoirs now have Visual Image Analysis (VIA) technology available, which may be a means of better assessing meat yield. The challenge in this context would be how to group individual animals into usable reporting categories.

There are many complex factors involved in the ongoing debate on price reporting and carcass assessment, and many unanswered questions – not least who would audit and pay for a different assessment process? ➤

Percentage of saleable beef from an average side weight of 145 kg					
Confirmation score	Fat class				
	2	3	4L	4H	Overall
U-	76.5	73.8	71.7	70.4	73.1
R	74.8	72.1	70.0	68.7	71.4
O+	73.1	70.4	68.3	67.0	69.7
O-	71.7	69.0	66.9	65.6	68.3
P	70.8	68.1	66.1	64.7	67.4
Overall	74.1	71.4	69.4	68.0	

Source: AHDB 2011



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