

LIVESTOCK+

QMS Sharing best practice from Scottish livestock businesses **SPRING/SUMMER 2018**

+ *Updates*

SCOTCH BEEF CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

EXPERIENCE BRINGS CONFIDENCE
AND CHANGE FOR MONITOR FARMER

YOUNG PIG FARMER FOCUSES ON
TECHNOLOGY AND EFFICIENCY

FEATURES

**Practical Steps to Establish
Rotational Grazing**

**Scottish SPCA - Working
with Livestock Farmers**

**Optimising Grazed Grass Pays
Dividends for Glenluce Farmer**

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WELCOME

“As Scotland celebrates 2018 as the Year of Young People it is perhaps fitting that three young farmers are featured in this issue.

Lynn Argo, Robert Fleming and John Howie are all shrewd business people, contributing massively to the success of their respective family businesses. They are also fantastic ambassadors for our industry and must surely provide inspiration for other young people.

As the uncertainty surrounding the Brexit process shows little sign of abating, concentrating on what farmers can influence themselves has to be the priority. Each of the farmers featured in this latest edition is clearly aware of the benefits of fully understanding the physical and financial aspects of their business and the role this plays in successful management.

Equally the marketing campaigns we deliver behind our industry's brands – Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork – are underpinned by consumer research and the latest retail sales information.

This ensures we develop effective advertising campaigns which deliver maximum benefit for the industry through the careful targeting of consumers with creative content which resonates with them. We also seek feedback from those working in different parts of the Scottish industry on the timing and focus of our campaigns and our thanks go to everyone who supports us with this, particularly the members of our marketing strategy groups. For more information about our current Scotch Beef campaign, see page 18.

Consumer awareness of the welfare standards behind our brands is also boosted by our association with the Scottish SPCA, particularly for Specially Selected Pork. We are particularly grateful to new Chief Executive, Kirsteen Campbell for sharing her first impressions of the Scottish livestock sector.

I look forward to meeting you all at shows and events later this year. +

Jim McLaren,
Chairman, Quality Meat Scotland

LIVESTOCK+

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Front cover image: John Howie from Girtridg Farm, North Ayrshire's monitor farm.

Chief Executive's Message



It's been nine months since I took up this role and it's been a major learning curve getting to know the red meat sector as well as the team within QMS.

I have met so many people right across our footprint including farmers, processors, feed suppliers, auction marts, hauliers, secondary processors, retailers, butchers, food service providers and chefs and it's great to see the pride and passion that exists within the sector. As a major player in the Scottish food sector we work closely with a range of industry and Government stakeholders to ensure the Scottish red meat industry is at the leading edge of innovation and best practice.

You will see many examples of this in this edition of Livestock+, from the Fleming family who have revolutionised their business through improved grassland management, to young farmer Lynn Argo who has embraced technology and innovation to help her family business prosper.

Brexit brings many challenges and unknowns, so if the livestock industry is to progress it's important to take time to reflect on what it's doing well and what it could do differently. This is exactly what we have been doing within QMS; our Board and executive team have been taking time to develop our new strategy which will be launched soon.

Our Strategy for 2018 to 2023 is to support the development of a sustainable, professional, resilient and profitable Scottish red meat industry which makes an important contribution to Scotland Food & Drink's target of £30bn by 2030. We have developed four strategic aims: - building our brands; supporting sustainable growth; developing capability and capacity within the sector; and delivering a range of professional support services.

I have just returned from a red meat industry study visit to New Zealand which was funded by the UK & New Zealand Governments and it's amazing to see how the industry operates and measures its performance, as well as witnessing their success in exporting to more than 100 markets.

I hope that the examples of how our industry is evolving given within this issue of Livestock+ gives you the opportunity to think about how you develop your own business.+

Alan Clarke
Chief Executive,
Quality Meat Scotland

Vital Role of Hill Farming Emphasised

The message that livestock farming in Scotland's hills and mountains can create productive larders for quality beef and lamb, as well as delivering environmental benefits, was highlighted at an event near Fort William earlier this year.



The "Vision for Scotland's Hills and Mountains" event, at Banavie, was organised jointly by the Lochaber Monitor Farm and NFU Scotland. It brought together a range of expert speakers including Laurent Vernet from QMS, Claudia Rowse from Scottish Natural Heritage and Jonnie Hall from NFU Scotland, who each explored different

views on the future use of Scotland's hills and mountains – from the environmental perspective to the market opportunities. QMS has developed a short video featuring interviews with each of the key speakers, including local farmer Angus MacFadyen, of Bragleenmore Farm, near Oban.+

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

Opportunity to join QMS Board

Applications are being sought for a new Chair of QMS and up to four board members.

The appointments, made by Scottish Ministers, will each be for four years' duration. The new Chair and one board member will take up their appointments on 1 September 2018, and the other new board members will take up their appointments on 1 April 2019.

Further information can be found at www.qmscotland.co.uk and the deadline for applications is 16 April.

The QMS board is comprised of a diverse mix of high-calibre individuals, passionate about the future of the Scottish red meat sector. The board consists of up to 12 members, including the Chair – currently Jim McLaren.+

Latest Scotch Beef Campaign Launched

Building on the success of last year's Scotch Beef PGI campaign, QMS has launched its 2018 promotional activity at the beginning of March.

London, the Home Counties and the home of the brand, Scotland, will be the focus of the two-month campaign, which aims to build awareness of and trust in Scotch Beef, reinforcing the message that it is the best beef money can buy.

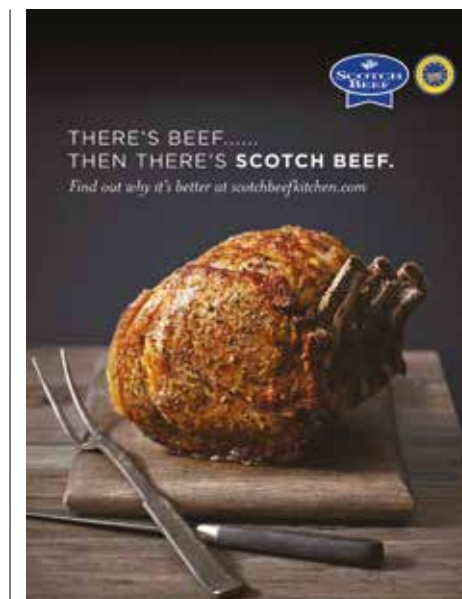
This year, the campaign will feature various cuts of Scotch Beef and include a focus on roasting joints as well as a celebration of eating occasions and the ritual of sitting

round the table with family and friends to enjoy a delicious roast dinner.

The campaign aims to engage consumers and provide contemporary alternatives to traditional roast dinner serving suggestions. Its strapline – "There's beef..... then there's Scotch Beef" – showcases Scotch Beef and the flavour, provenance and integrity which underpin the brand's PGI status.

Over 8.2 million consumers will be targeted across the UK during March and April via press, digital, broadcast, and billboard advertising, to inform, educate and inspire them to use Scotch Beef when they cook.

Commenting on the campaign launch, Suzie Carlaw, Marketing Controller at QMS, said: "The dedication of the industry is second to none, and we have worked together to create a world-class brand which delivers on its commitment to quality and taste. This new campaign will continue to build on Scotch Beef's reputation as the best possible beef from Scotland, increasing awareness and sales."+



Read more about the campaign on pages 18 and 19

New Steak Guides Produced

QMS has launched two new guides to help consumers select and cook the perfect Scotch Beef PGI steak.

'Steaks – Your Perfect Guide' features useful information on the different cuts available and the best way to cook and complement steaks, with recipes for sauces, butters, rubs and marinades as well as sensational sides.

'Get it Right Every Time' is a handy visual guide showing how to cook the perfect steak - however you like it. Both guides are free from Scotch Butchers Club shops, which also have expert staff on hand to share advice on choosing cuts and serving suggestions.+

For more information on Scotch Beef PGI, or to find your local Scotch Butchers Club Member, visit www.scotchkitchen.com/scotch-butchers-club



JAPANESE BUYERS IMPRESSED BY SCOTCH BEEF

A group of 25 Japanese meat buyers were invited by QMS to visit key sites in the Scottish red meat industry supply chain recently, to gain a better understanding of Scotch Beef PGI production and to learn why it is recognised internationally as a top-quality product.

During their time in Scotland, the group visited Netherton Farm, near Blackford in Perthshire, which is run by the McLaren family, and ABP meat processors in Perth.

Laurent Vernet, QMS's Director of Strategic Engagement, arranged the trip and was delighted with the feedback from the group.



"The visit from our Japanese guests was a positive step for the industry in establishing new markets outwith the EU. In Japan beef is very much a premium product, and our guests were particularly interested in the levels of traceability guaranteed by our assurance scheme in Scotland," he said.+

Video Highlights Potential of Turnips as Winter Feed

How farmers can make the most of turnips as a low-cost winter feed crop and the importance of taking steps to keep sheep clean are highlighted in a new video by QMS.

“Turnips offer a great source of nutrition for sheep and lambs,” said Kirsten Williams, SAC Beef and Sheep consultant with SAC Consulting, part of Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC), who appears in this video, along with Aberdeenshire farmer and vet Andrew Littlejohn.



Keeping ground dry for livestock this winter has proved to be challenging due to heavy snowfall and subsequent snowmelt. For some areas, this has been in addition to a very wet summer.

“It is important for the welfare of the sheep and the income of the farmer that they are kept clean,” said Ms Williams. “Dirty lambs will be penalised at the abattoir and auction market, so ensuring sheep have a run-back area where they can lie and ruminate is a key part of good husbandry of sheep on turnips.”

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

HRH THE PRINCESS ROYAL OPENS NEW RENFREWSHIRE BUTCHERY FACILITY



Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal visited Renfrewshire recently to officially open a new, state-of-the-art butchery production premises at McCaskie’s in Wemyss Bay.

The new facility has been developed through an investment of around £800,000 from owner Nigel Ovens and his family, in order to help the company meet the rapid growth of demand for its products.

The Ovens family and their team are no strangers to winning awards. Among the family’s recent accolades was the “Champion of Champions” title in QMS’s inaugural Chef’s Choice Scotch Lamb PGI Awards, with their popular “Scotch Lamb Lollipops”.

The royal guest was at McCaskie’s in her capacity as President of the Scotch Beef Club, run by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS). McCaskie’s is a member of the Scotch Butchers Club and prides itself on selling 100% Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork.

New Video Helps Farmers Fight Fluke

The importance of using the right flukicide product at the right time is the key message in a new video produced by QMS.

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

“Not all flukicide products kill all ages of liver fluke,” said vet Dr Fiona Lovatt, who features in the video “Using the right product at the right time of year is vital in order to control fluke.”

Treating with a flukicide that kills young, immature flukes in the late autumn will prevent sudden deaths due to acute liver fluke disease. In the spring, livestock can be treated with a flukicide that will kill adult fluke, as this will prevent eggs being passed out onto the pasture.

Dr Lovatt also suggested testing faecal samples from thin cows or ewes over the winter for the presence of fluke eggs. “If fluke are present on your farm, your vet or advisor will help you work out an effective management and treatment plan for your livestock.”



QMS SUPPORTS FOOD AND FARMING DAYS

QMS’s Health & Education team works very closely with the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET) and supports a variety of farm visits and classroom talks, with the aim being to bring farming, the working countryside and its practices to life for young people across Scotland.

This spring they have attended several food and farming days, including Dumfries & Galloway, Perth & Kinross, Fife, Clyde, Forth Valley and Dumfries, Lomond & Renfrew, to tell children about beef, lamb and pork production, what’s in their meat and how they can include it in a healthy balanced diet.

For further information about the work of the health and education team, visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/health-and-education



SCOTLAND’S STUDENTS GET EXPERT BUTCHERY TRAINING

A new pilot training programme has been launched to encourage young people across Scotland to develop their butchery skills.

The venture sees the Scotch Butchers Club and Scotch Beef Club – both run by QMS – collaborate with the Scottish Federation of Meat Traders Association (SFMTA) and City of Glasgow College.

The course aims to combat the shortage of young people going into butchery and has been designed to increase the skills, knowledge and confidence of catering students and those studying professional cookery at colleges throughout Scotland.



Working with beef, lamb or pork, the students are not only learning the skills of a master butcher but also have access to further support to help them find placements within a retail butchery environment.

“Attracting, training and retaining younger skilled staff are key issues for the butchery industry, and we are delighted to be supporting the young students in their training,” said Graeme Sharp, Manager of the Scotch Butchers Club.



Optimising Grazed Grass is Secret to Success

Aiming to get the most from grass has seen a Glenluce-based farming family adopt a novel approach to increasing stock numbers, taking on grazing cattle on contract from a select number of other herds.

Running a 200-cow Aberdeen-Angus dominated suckler herd, Robert Fleming and his father, John, have radicalised their farm management in recent years to capitalise on the productivity their ground offers them.

"It's pretty straightforward really," says Robert Fleming. "We have a great grass-growing location, being near the coast and pretty much at sea level. We have an early farm, so it makes sense to get the most we can from grazed grass.

"Allied to that, I'm cost conscious, and anything we buy in will always add cost to the system and take profit out of it."

Such is the family's commitment to a grass-based system that cows are currently only housed for about 60–70 days a year, and silage is made as a necessity of excessive grass growth rather than as a need for winter feed.

"Obviously we do need some silage over the winter while cattle are housed, but I don't aim to shut great swathes of

the farm up for silage at the start of the spring; we just take out surplus paddocks if need be through the season.

"Wrapping grass in black plastic is an expensive thing to do, so the more we can graze and the less we have to cut the better," said Robert.

The family manage a total of 240 hectares, split among three farms but run as one business. Their grasp of costs, margins and targets needed to make a profit was one of the things that

impressed the judges of the Scotch Beef Farm of the Year 2017, run by AgriScot and QMS, and led to the farm being named overall winner of the award in November. Commenting on the award, which is sponsored by Thorntons Solicitors, Robert said it was rewarding that the effort he and the team at Castle Sinniness make has been recognised by others. "We have made some significant changes to the way we run the cattle enterprises and the farm over the last few years, and this award is testament to the improvements we have made."

With the herd all spring calving, a key focus has been on achieving a compact calving pattern; cows now calve within nine weeks, while heifer replacements all calve within six weeks and 70% of the herd calves in the first three weeks. "That's come about as a result of being strict with bulling dates and also retaining heifers from earlier-calving cows.

"The more cows that calve earlier in the season, the greater the choice of replacement heifers I have," explained Robert.

Indeed, such has been the farm's attention to fertility that this year the herd weaned at 99% for cows put to the bull. "That is an exceptional year, but it is the result of good cow management and selecting replacements from the earlier-born heifers. We scanned at 96.5% and tagged at 101%, with 14 sets of twins included.

"We would generally expect 8–10 sets of twins a year, which again is a sign of the fertility within the herd. It can create issues, but we'll never have a perfect calving season, so having a spare calf or two about avoids the need to buy in a calf for a cow which has lost her own," he added.

"Cows are housed over the New Year, having grazed brassica crops over winter; the latter being used as a break crop between grass leys. They are then turned out again in the middle of March, in time to start calving in the first week of April, with cows calving in sacrifice paddocks."

Yearling cattle are the first to be turned out at Castle Sinniness in February. These are grown on at grass over the summer, with the aim of either finishing the steers or selling them as forward stores, depending on the year.

"Wrapping grass in black plastic is an expensive thing to do, so the more we can graze and the less we have to cut the better."

Heifers are likewise either kept as replacements, sold for breeding or finished on-farm, said Robert. "Last year we sold all the steers as forward stores, as there was a strong demand for them in July. It made more sense to sell them than to try to finish them ourselves, and that in turn freed up grass to allow us to source younger and lighter cattle to graze, with the intention of selling them deadweight next summer."

Adding to stock numbers through the spring and summer are up to 700 head of grazing cattle, which arrive from mid-February onwards. "We take these on a performance basis, being paid on the gain they achieve while they're here.

"It is a useful way of getting some additional cash flow from our grassland and helps us maximise productivity without necessarily exposing ourselves to all the risk."

However, looking ahead, Robert says things could change even more dramatically, with a possibility of the family's commercial cows being farmed elsewhere and the home farms used solely for growing cattle.

"I believe if we didn't have cows on the farm, we could keep cattle outside all year round, grazing growing cattle on a greater area of brassicas through the winter rather than housing cows and feeding them silage.

"We need to make better use of grass at the shoulders of the grazing season, and cows are more difficult to do that with compared with younger cattle," he explained.

Allied to a focus on fertility and grass management, the Flemings also take herd health seriously, with the breeding herd closed to female purchases for the last seven years and stock bulls bought for the 50-cow pedigree Aberdeen-Angus herd on a bi-annual basis.

"We use AI in a select number of the bottom 10–15% of commercial heifers, using sexed British Friesian semen to bring some milk genetics into the herd. Embryo transfer is used in a small number of pedigree cows to broaden the genetic base, with the aim of breeding a stock bull or two for our own use.

"This allows us to access high-quality genetics from anywhere in the world while also breeding from cows we know have performed in our system. It's the best way of delivering new genetics into our herd at the lowest risk level," he added.

Additionally, as a result of bringing grazing cattle onto the farm, the family have split the unit in two, with breeding cattle on one half and growing cattle on another. "That protects the high health status of the breeding herd and avoids any chance of disease crossing over."+



Practical Steps for Successful Rotational Grazing

The decision by a Fife family to introduce a rotational grazing system to their beef and sheep enterprise has boosted their farm's grass production, as well as reducing its fertiliser bill.

Jim Wilson and his son Matthew, from Balhelvie Farm near Newburgh in Fife, recently hosted a visit by Quality Meat Scotland's Better Grazing Group so that local farmers could learn more about establishing a rotational grazing system and watch an electric fencing demonstration.

Grazing expert James Daniel was the main speaker at the meeting. He founded his company, Precision Grazing, having been inspired whilst managing a beef station in New Zealand owned by Harry Weir, a pioneer in grazing system design and management.

James' key message was that managed grazing is easy to adopt. Simply providing a group of animals with eight fields, and moving them every three to six days, will improve pasture production by 30% (compared to set-stocking).

If fields were too large to be grazed within five to six days with the desired group size then they should be sub-divided into paddocks using semi-permanent electric fencing. This investment in infrastructure will provide a rapid return, often paying back in less than 18 months.

James explained that the first goal of grazing management is to ensure that the animals always have enough pasture, of the correct quality to fulfil their genetic potential for lactation or growth. This can provide a big win, with some of his clients achieving a 50% increase in production per hectare simply by changing their management.

"Farmers should focus on managing their grass using their livestock rather than concentrating on silage making," he added.

Rotational grazing has become a subject of much discussion in Scotland, driven by the enthusiasm of farmers involved in QMS's monitor farm and grazing group projects. Many livestock farmers are now trying it out and beginning to reap the benefits of increased output/ha.

James suggested that farmers thinking of trying rotational grazing, but unsure how to begin, should start on a small area of four to five hectares. This should be divided into eight to 10 paddocks, ideally of equal size, and livestock moved every three to five days. This would provide a great platform to enable them to learn "on the job", developing the confidence to expand to a larger area in the second year.

He said that cattle are easiest to start with, as they only need one or two-strand fences rather than the three used with sheep. Most of the fencing could be temporary polywire for the first year, meaning a set-up cost of as little as £500.

He admitted that it will take a season to get a feel for the system, but the amount of pasture grown by that area will be far higher than if it was simply set-stocked.

"The key to success is getting the infrastructure right to create a system which works for you. Simple things like providing water to each paddock and ensuring any sub-divisional electric fences are reliably powered using mains or solar saves a lot of labour and makes the management much easier.

Water supply is the main limiting factor to stocking rate and group size, particularly in cattle.

"A 650kg lactating suckler cow will drink around 97 litres a day. If cows are in a large field with only one trough, they tend to travel to water to drink as a herd - creating a very high peak demand.

"However, smaller paddocks of around two hectares encourage more regular drinking, with demand spread over five hours," he added.

He warned, "It is important to measure the existing water supply first before choosing group sizes, and be prepared to invest if required as water will often be the first limiting factor on summer stocking rate."

At Balhelvie Farm, the Wilsons run 75 Aberdeen-Angus and Angus cross suckler cows plus 200 cross ewes, with all progeny being finished on the farm.

They have attended many QMS monitor farm and grazing group meetings in the last few years, where they picked up information on the benefits of rotational grazing, so have been trialling its use on their own 65 hectares of grass.

Matthew Wilson said: "We have been splitting paddocks with electric fences for the last two years and have noticeably increased the amount of grass we have grown while reducing fertiliser usage. The challenge has been utilising all the grass at peak growth times."

Simply providing a group of animals with eight fields, and moving them every three to six days, will improve pasture production by 30%.



For more information about the Better Grazing project, visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/grazing

James agreed that this can be challenging and suggested that the Wilsons could use a quick 16-20 day rotation in peak growth, as well as removing some paddocks earlier for silage cut. If quality has, however, been lost in early summer, he advised that this can be recovered by grazing with dry ewes or mowing to a height of 50mm.

"The mower rather than the topper is the tool for the job, as it can be set lower providing better quality re-growth," he recommended.

Discussing electric fencing, James explained that this was a psychological barrier; its strength was dependent on an appropriate voltage and correct wire height. "When erecting a fence, posts should be placed as often as necessary to maintain wire height up to a maximum of 18m, when using three wires, or 24m when using one wire," he said.

"As polywire has a much higher resistance than high tensile steel, it should only be used for temporary fences which are being regularly moved," he added.

To ensure a good voltage, he stressed, good earthing is vital. "Galvanised metal posts or similar need to be driven into the ground, ideally in a wet site, allowing one metre in the ground per two to four joules of energiser output."

He suggested that any farmer needing to install sub-divisions should think ahead and invest in an energiser big enough for future plans. "Bear in mind that although, theoretically, a one joule energiser output will power 10km of wire, in practice this will be closer to two to four kilometres of wire," he said. +



Image: Matthew and Jim Wilson, Balhelvie Farm, Newburgh.

EXPERIENCE BRINGS CONFIDENCE AND CHANGE

A young Ayrshire farmer is intent on driving his business forward by constantly challenging himself, with the back-up and support of his monitor farm community group.

John Howie (27) farms 170 hectares at Girtridge Farm, near Dundonald, in partnership with his mum Margaret and sister, Mary. Having studied accounts and finance at Strathclyde University, John came back to the farm with an understanding of figures, but was less confident about the application of new farm management techniques.

He was very keen, therefore, to be one of the nine monitor farms established in 2016 as part of the joint initiative by Quality Meat Scotland and AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds.

He has embraced the project wholeheartedly and, one year in, has been delighted with the results of some of the changes he has made so far, thanks to suggestions put forward by local farmers who have attended meetings on the farm.

John said: "Being part of the monitor farm process is challenging but rewarding. It pushes me to make changes happen but has also given me the confidence to see them through."

IMPROVEMENTS MADE AT GIRTRIDGE TO DATE

- SUCCESSFUL INTRODUCTION OF ROTATIONAL GRAZING SYSTEM
- VACCINATION STRATEGY ESTABLISHED FOR IBR
- FEC TESTING IN EWES RESULTS IN REDUCTION OF ANTHELMINTIC USE AND COST SAVINGS
- INVESTMENT IN CATTLE HANDLING SYSTEM
- BUILDING DESIGN REVIEW WITH IMPROVED VENTILATION



For more
information visit
www.monitorfarms.co.uk

Enterprises at Girtridge include 28 hectares of spring barley, but after some number crunching which showed a potential increase in gross margin of £133 per hectare due to an expected increase in yield, he has decided to sow one field in winter barley. John said: "Sowing in the autumn also spreads the workload at lambing time, especially now we have increased the sheep numbers."

John has invested in the genetics of his breeding flock and bought 70 Aberfield cross gimmers from Peter Eccles, Lothians monitor farmer, as well as 80 mule and Texel cross gimmers from Ayr Market to add to his existing mule flock, so he has 241 to lamb this year. He has used two Abermax rams over the gimmers and plans to compare results with the rest of the ewes, which were put to Suffolk and Texel cross Beltex rams.

Girtridge 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 and funded by the Scottish Government.

As a direct result of advice at one of the monitor farm meetings, John now records and monitors faecal egg counts as a tool for deciding when to treat for worms. Consequently, lambs were only dosed for worms once last summer and ewes didn't get wormed at all, and only needed a single treatment for fluke. Reducing the amount of anthelmintics required has significantly reduced costs, including labour.

All lambs at Girtridge are finished off grass and receive no hard feeding. The ewes, which lamb indoors, are fed second-cut, baled silage and 100g per day of high pro soya per lamb carried for their final month of pregnancy.

He has been able to increase his sheep numbers thanks to a very successful first attempt at rotational grazing. He said: "We split a 12-hectare field into 10 paddocks, and grazed 120 ewes and 208 lambs on it from June to the end of August and ewes right through until October. The investment in electric fencing worked out at only 3p per ewe per day and we used no nitrogen fertiliser, just some lime in the spring."

John is hopeful that by extending the rotational grazing area and focusing on making 11+ ME silage, as well as introducing stubble turnips after winter barley, he can get sheep numbers up to around 500 in the future; this is something he could not have dreamed of before becoming a monitor farmer.

He has made similar improvements to his cattle enterprise. A small herd of nine suckler cows are the subject of much debate at the moment, and John is currently working out gross margins to make a decision on whether to expand the herd or stop this enterprise in the future.

Around 220 cattle were finished at Girtridge last year, mostly heifers bought at Ayr market at around 15 months and sold at over two-years-old. However, John said: "Our sheds hold 250 cattle and our machinery costs are quite high, so it makes sense to fill the shed and spread our fixed costs. We aim to finish 300 cattle this year, rising to 400 next year."

John was disappointed with the silage he made this year. With an ME of 10.2, it is fed ad-lib in a Total Mixed Ration along with home-grown barley, soya and minerals – with the aim of a 1.3kg/day growth rate.

"Being part of the monitor farm process is challenging but rewarding. It pushes me to make changes happen but has also given me the confidence to see them through."

He has made great inroads into the growth rates by using rotational grazing in the summer and he would like to make better quality silage, which would cheapen the winter ration and allow the heifers to reach their target deadweight of 350kg in a shorter time.

During the summer of 2017, John rotationally grazed 70 heifers on 16 hectares (representing a stocking rate of 2.99 livestock units per hectare), with no supplementary feeding, and achieved a daily growth rate of 1.2kg. The cost of grazing was only 10p per head per day not including reseeding. John said: "On another area we setstocked at 1.89 livestock units per hectare, gaining only 0.52kg/day, so we will definitely be investing in more electric fence wire."

The community group persuaded John to invest in weigh scales so he can monitor his cattle, and he believes this to be a big advantage as it enables him to select cattle on both finish and weight before sending them off to Stoddart's at Ayr or Highland Meats at Saltcoats. He said: "We are lucky to have a local market and two local abattoirs on our doorstep."

John is optimistic about the future as he enters the second year of the current monitor farm project: "During the first year of being a monitor farm we have really had our eyes opened at the true potential of our farm," he commented.

"The main focus for the remaining two years will be to maximise every acre in terms of efficiency and profitability. With the innovative ideas from our community group we are confident that we will have a booming rural business."



Working with Farmers FOR A THRIVING SCOTTISH LIVESTOCK SECTOR

Consumers are increasingly seeking reassurance that the meat they eat comes from animals that have been well cared for during their lives. QMS is working with the Scottish SPCA, Scotland's leading animal welfare charity, to promote strong welfare practices within the Scottish livestock industry.

Here, Kirsteen Campbell, Chief Executive of the Scottish SPCA, tells us how they work with farmers in Scotland to ensure that livestock welfare remains a top priority.

What is your background?

After studying accountancy at Aberdeen University, a lot of my career was spent in a variety of marketing, communication and business development roles in financial services in Edinburgh. Before joining the Scottish SPCA, I worked as Director of Corporate Services at Scotland's national skills agency.

Do you have any personal experience of farming/agriculture?

Not directly, but when working at Scotland's national skills agency, I was fortunate to meet many amazing people involved in Scotland's vibrant food and drink sector. The commitment to delivering to very high standards and supporting youth employment and a highly skilled workforce was exemplary.

What are your priorities for the Scottish SPCA relating to livestock farming?

Maintaining and enhancing our relationship with the entire industry is of paramount importance. We are committed to working with the industry to ensure that Scottish producers are recognised as supporting the highest levels of animal welfare and are able to operate on an even playing field within European and world markets.

Scottish farming has, and will continue to have, challenges. The Society is concerned about the pending impact of Brexit and its potential financial implications on the industry, coupled with the increasing reliance of non-UK workers within the sector. We believe many within the industry would suffer if access to EU workers were denied.

We will continue to be passionate advocates of the importance of a thriving livestock sector in Scotland, committed to high standards of animal welfare.

How does the Scottish SPCA work with the farming community in Scotland?

The Scottish SPCA has a dual role when it comes to the livestock industry. We recognise that high farm animal welfare comes at a cost and are consequently keen to ensure that the Scottish farming industry is sustainable and profitable.

The Society works with the industry to ensure that legislation is both practical and achievable. Being authorised by the Scottish Minister, the Scottish SPCA enforces the welfare provisions of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006. We view prosecution as a last resort and strive to prevent suffering at all times.

How knowledgeable are Scottish SPCA inspectors about practical livestock farming?

Many of our inspectors have joined the Society from a practical farming background and are incredibly knowledgeable. All our inspectors have an in-depth knowledge of current legislation and apply the law in a practical manner. Through our close partnership with the industry including QMS, our inspectors are kept up to date with all modern farming practices.

How much does the Scottish SPCA value its partnership with QMS?

Enormously! In the UK, and probably Europe, the link between QMS and the Scottish SPCA is unique.

Like QMS, the Scottish SPCA is committed to continually improving animal welfare.

Our relationship is unique in that, unlike some other partnerships, there is no commercial gain for the Scottish SPCA and no inspection fees or levies upon the industry for our part in joint visits with assurance scheme assessors.

How important do you consider quality assurance to be?

Quality assurance is of fundamental importance, and we are proud to play our part.

The Scottish SPCA believes that Scotland is home to some of the highest standards of livestock welfare in the world. Robust assurance schemes give the public confidence that all standards are being adhered to - I think that's vital. Our joint QMS/Scottish SPCA approach provides yet another level of public trust.

Assurance schemes have improved consumer confidence over the last 10-15 years; they set the benchmark for the industry and can also give producers an extra level of confidence.



If you get a report of poor animal welfare on a livestock farm, what action do Scottish SPCA inspectors take?

Thankfully, very few complaints are received in relation to Scottish farms; however, as in any area of life, there will always be a tiny minority who try to bend the rules.

The Scottish SPCA will investigate any welfare concern raised, regardless of the species. As with any investigation, the inspector will establish the facts and discuss the issue with the owner. Following this, there are a variety of actions that may be taken (short of prosecution), ranging from advice to formal action, such as improvement notices being issued.

Several incidents have occurred where Scottish SPCA inspectors have acted as facilitators between the farmer and other agencies to resolve technical issues that are preventing the movement of animals.

What tend to be the factors behind these rare cases of poor practice/neglect?

Many of the complaints that we receive are from people who are unaware of legal farming practices, such as livestock in fields when it is cold or raining.

Several of the genuine instances we have dealt with are brought to light by the overall condition of the farm, or by fallen livestock being left and not disposed of. This can lead the inspector to find more serious issues beyond the initial complaint. This goes to show the importance of overall farm appearance and biosecurity.

Over the years, common factors have included financial difficulty, family breakup, and age or mental health-related issues.

How have the standards of animal welfare improved on Scottish farms in recent years?

Throughout Scotland, there has been massive investment in the livestock sector aimed at improving both welfare standards and profitability. The legislation has not radically changed over recent years; however, assurance schemes have helped to drive animal welfare standards upwards. Recognised animal health plans have also focused attention on welfare and prevention.

Are farmers placing an increasing value on the role of the Scottish SPCA in communicating a positive message about Scottish livestock farming to the public?

The Scottish SPCA would certainly like to think so! Gone are the days when we were simply seen as "the cruelty man" by the industry. The Scottish SPCA can give an independent voice of support for farmers to both the general public and politicians for the best practice followed by the entire sector.

Finally, what are your impressions of the livestock farmers you have met in your role so far?

My overwhelming view is one of very hard-working people, passionate about animal welfare, who are keen to innovate and develop their businesses. Farmers have been very welcoming of the support provided by the Scottish SPCA and view our involvement as an asset. Having not come from a farming background, it has been fantastic to see first-hand the commitment, professionalism and enthusiasm shown by livestock farmers. I'm keen to do all I can to support this thriving and vitally important sector in Scotland.✦

SCOTTISH SPCA
Scotland's Animal Welfare Charity

"The Scottish SPCA believes that Scotland is home to some of the highest standards of livestock welfare in the world. Robust assurance schemes can give the public confidence that all standards are being adhered to - I think that's vital."

FOCUSSING ON TECHNOLOGY AND EFFICIENCY

A commitment to making use of new technology and improving efficiency is a key part of the business philosophy of twenty-five-year-old Lynn Argo, who is making her mark on the pig industry.

Lynn, who is based at Harvieston Farm, Catterline, Stonehaven, has a BSc Honours in Agriculture from SRUC Craibstone. She has been working full time in the family business since she graduated in 2014 and, along with her father, David, is determined to drive the business forward.

The firm of DW Argo has two main pig units: Brigstanes, just a mile away from the home farm, and Ellismoss, about 45 minutes' drive away at Kinnellar. Between them, there are 1,800 sows and 16 staff.

Lynn explained: "The nucleus herd is at Ellismoss. Each week, 90 to 100 gilts are either sold for breeding or retained from that unit, while the rest of the weaned pigs go to Brigstanes to be finished."

The family have 400 hectares at their own farms and contract farm a further 150 hectares. Most of the land is down to cereals, which are all used for pig feed. They also grow potatoes – and daffodils for both flowers and bulbs.

Since finishing her degree and joining the family business, Lynn has done a bit of everything, but her key responsibility is to look after approximately 5,000 fattening pigs out at "bed and breakfast" all over Scotland. She said: "I spend quite a lot of time on the road, checking the health of these pigs, selecting pigs for slaughter and organising transport at these outlying units."

She reckons she is lucky that her father has given her a free hand on the farm and responsibility for certain areas. She said: "I did not expect to come home so quickly, but a long-term worker retired so the time was right, and I feel it is a natural progression to bring the knowledge from my degree back to the farm."

An essential part of her job is monitoring and analysing costs and margins, so she spends a lot of time in the office inputting information into Agrosoft, the QMS-subsidised management computer programme.

Lynn is also a member of the management committee of the pig Monitor Farm group supported by QMS and Opportunity North East (ONE). This, she said, has certainly widened her knowledge.

Just before Christmas, the firm invested in a new Pocco wet feed system for pigs from 7kg to 35kg. This mixes the feed in small batches and feeds little and often, keeping the feed fresh all the time. This should mitigate any set-back the pigs have from leaving the sows, keeping the daily live-weight gains high. At the moment, the average feed conversion ratio from 7kg to 35kg is 1.6 and from 35kg to 110kg it is 2.78.

An essential part of her job is monitoring and analysing costs and margins, so she spends a lot of time in the office inputting information into Agrosoft, the QMS-subsidised management computer programme.

As on most pig units, one of Lynn's aims is to increase the birth weight of pigs and reduce mortality between birth and weaning. Currently, each sow has 2.35 litters per year with an average of 13.2 piglets born alive per sow per litter and an average of 11.8 piglets weaned per sow per litter.

This means 600 pigs per week are finished at the target live-weight of 110kg, which gives an ideal carcase deadweight of 82kg when they are sold to QPL, Brechin. However, they are also selling 300 per week at 30kg for others to grow on.

With the objective of keeping more pigs at home, the Argos are in the process of building two sheds at Brigstanes, which will have the

capacity for 5,280 finishing pigs, and Lynn said she is looking forward to the first pigs going into the new unit in April or May this year.

Luckily 2017 was a good year for pigs, with decent prices, but the fluctuations are hard for everyone to deal with. Lynn believes they are lucky to have the abattoir at Brechin, which is close to home, and fortunate that the supermarkets like to have local produce for their Scottish stores. She said: "When Brechin was out of action for three months last year, following a fire, we had to transport pigs to Manchester and Ireland – so we are delighted that the plant is back up and running again."

The challenge for all Scotland's pig farmers is not only to get a pig from birth to slaughter as quickly and efficiently as possible, but also to give customers a good eating experience. Lynn is proud to be producing Specially Selected Pork and said: "It is great that QMS promotes the Scottish product, as our welfare standards are high and legislation is strict. It is rewarding to deliver a high-quality product."

The firm, along with every other QMS-assured pig unit in Scotland, has signed up to the QMS Scottish Pig Health Charter. The charter was launched in 2015 by the industry to further enhance the range of measures already in place to protect, monitor and improve pig health on Scottish farms and add weight to the existing Scottish Pig Health Scheme, run by QMS.

There is no doubting Lynn's passion for the business. She has learned from the bottom up from some of the long-term members of staff at D W Argo and from her dad, and now she is busy overseeing the whole production process and looking positively towards the future. +



year of young people
bliadhna na h-òigridh
2018

HIGH IMPACT CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED TO HIGHLIGHT SCOTCH BEEF PGI



Quality Meat Scotland has launched a major campaign behind Scotch Beef PGI with eye-catching adverts targeting consumers throughout Great Britain with a focus on Greater London, the Home Counties and Scotland.

This year sees the return of the successful “There’s beef then there’s Scotch Beef” campaign, which showcases Scotch Beef and the flavour, provenance and integrity which underpin the brand’s PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) status – ensuring consumers understand what the Scotch Beef PGI logo stands for.

This year’s campaign is targeting over 8.2 million consumers across the three key geographical areas. There continues to be a focus on raising the awareness of Scotch Beef PGI so that the consumer understands what the Scotch Beef PGI logo means and that trust in the brand continues to go from strength to strength.

The two-month long campaign, which QMS delivers on behalf of the Scottish red meat industry, is set to improve the already strong brand awareness of Scotch Beef PGI in the key GB regions. Currently 89% of the target market in Scotland recognise the Scotch Beef PGI logo and 37% in Greater London and the Home Counties are aware of the brand.

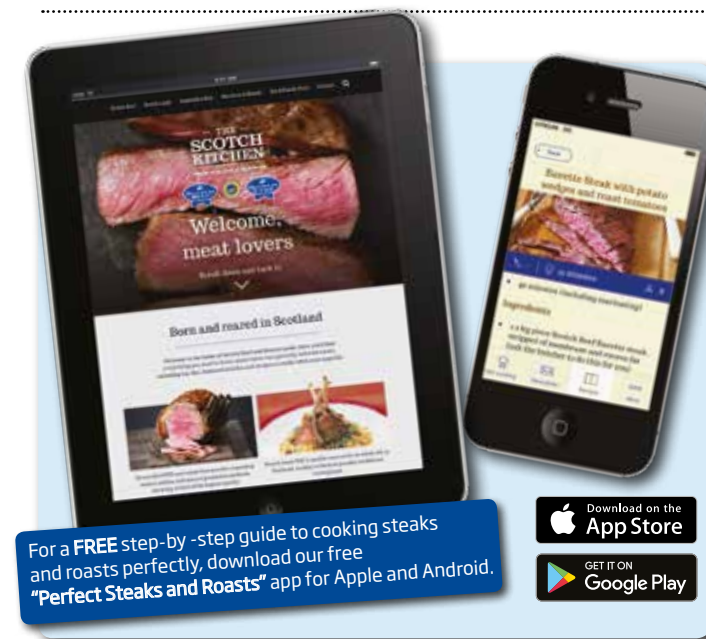
Consumers appreciate that a lot of work takes place behind the scenes to make sure that the Scotch Beef they buy from the retailer (whether that be an independent butcher, farmers’ market or multiple retailer) is the genuine product. They place their trust in the blue logo, expecting, quite rightly, that independent checks are undertaken with regard to traceability, animal welfare and whole life assurance. Currently, 80% of consumers in Scotland and 54% in Greater London and the Home Counties trust the Scotch Beef PGI brand.

Key activities in the campaign include poster sites across Central London and the Home Counties, focused on areas such as multiple retailers and commuter belt transport hubs.

There are features in key magazines such as Good Housekeeping, The Observer Magazine, The Sunday Times and The Telegraph throughout the campaign, to ensure the target market associates Scotch Beef with quality, heritage and premium provenance.



THE CAMPAIGN IN NUMBERS



With over 317,000 unique visitors using the consumer-facing website scotchkitchen.com, it is clear there is an appetite for cooking inspiration and top tips, so digital media is utilised throughout the campaign. This includes the promotion of a free cooking app called “Perfect Steaks and Roasts”, available to download from both the Apple and Google Play stores.

Last year, over 16,000 people used the app to help them cook their perfect steaks and roasts, and it’s a sure-fire tool for guaranteeing you cook your dish to perfection.

New for the 2018 campaign, is a radio partnership with Classic FM to communicate with the target market through a trusted and loyal medium throughout Greater London, the Home Counties and Scotland.

The 2018 campaign will be complemented by a range of PR activities which focus on roasting joints as the core cut, celebrating eating occasions, and the ritual of sitting round the table with family and friends to enjoy a delicious roast dinner.

New research, commissioned by QMS, shows that the British tradition of sitting down to a family meal together is in danger of becoming a thing of the past, with 57% of people no longer sitting down to a daily meal with their family or housemates.

Work, hobbies and technology are all getting in the way of the once-sacred family ritual of discussing the day over dinner.



Scotch Beef PGI is the best possible beef from Scotland – rich, tender and full of flavour, thanks to its provenance and quality assurances.

Londoners are least likely to eat with family or housemates, with only a quarter (26%) sitting down to eat together on a daily basis – while at the opposite end of the scale, in Wales, 53% of consumers dine as a household every day.

Working hours were named as the biggest barrier to eating together (48%), while a quarter of respondents were too busy with hobbies and leisure pursuits to make time for regular meals with loved ones or friends.

Twenty-two percent of respondents want to eat different foods from others in their households. But spare a thought for the 14% of Brits who would rather eat in separate rooms and the 5% (rising to 11% in London) who don’t get on well enough with those they live with to spend time together round the dinner table.

A small number (6%) said they simply did not have a dining table or space to eat together – in the Midlands, in particular, one in ten respondents (11%) said they didn’t have a table for mealtimes.

Even when people do get around the table, good food and conversation often lose out to TV and mobile phones. A staggering 64% of Brits regularly watch the box while eating; one fifth browse the internet on their mobile; 19% use a tablet; while 15% regularly text or email over dinner. Six per cent even chat via social media or use Facetime or Skype as they eat.

Millennials are the worst culprits for mobile mealtime interruptions, with 51% of 18 to 24-year-olds and 40% of 25 to 34-year-olds confessing to using their phone during dinner. The biggest TV addicts are 45 to 54-year olds.

During this campaign, many of the activities will focus on roasting joints. Whether it’s a Sunday roast with all the trimmings or a midweek meal, a roast offers an ideal time to enjoy good food and good conversation.

Scotch Beef PGI is the best possible beef from Scotland – rich, tender and full of flavour, thanks to its provenance and quality assurances. The 2018 campaign aims to educate consumers further, so that they understand the distinction between beef and Scotch Beef PGI so that when they see the Scotch Beef PGI label, they can be confident they are guaranteed to receive quality, tradition, integrity and great-tasting beef.+

by **Suzie Carlaw**, Marketing Controller at QMS

Campaign Partners





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

Find out why it's better at scotchbeefkitchen.com

