

# LIVESTOCK+

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

**SUMMER 2019**

## + Updates

SPOT CHECK PILOT SCHEME INTRODUCED

PROMOTING PRIDE AND PASSION  
IN THE SCOTTISH BEEF INDUSTRY

ROTATIONAL GRAZING LEADS TO  
SUCCESSFUL JOINT VENTURE

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**NSA Chair  
Shares her  
Vision for the  
Industry**

**Behind the  
Scenes of  
Highland Sheep  
Host Farm**

**Meeting Market Spec  
is Vital says Aberdeen  
Beef Farmer**

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Latest news, innovations,  
case studies...  
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[www.qmscotland.co.uk](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk)

MARKETING UPDATE • TECHNOLOGY • GRAZING MANAGEMENT • COLLABORATION



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

**NOW OPEN  
FOR ENTRIES!**



"I would encourage farmers to enter for these awards as it's a great way to champion the positive story of the Scottish red meat industry".  
Niall Jeffrey of Bielgrange Farm, Dunbar,  
2018 AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year



"These awards are a great way to raise the profile of the Scottish livestock industry."  
The McGowan family of Incheoch Farm, Blairgowrie,  
2018 AgriScot Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year

**QMS, AgriScot and Thorntons are looking for entries and nominations for the 2019 AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year and Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year awards.**

The application process is simple and the recipients 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](mailto:info@qmscotland.co.uk)



From left to right: Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year 2017 recipient: Charley Walker from Barnside Farm, Abbey St Bathans and Scotch Beef Farm of the Year 2017 recipient: Robert Fleming from Castle Sinniness, Glenluce.



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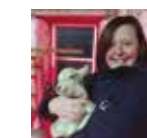
## LIVESTOCK+

**How to contact QMS:**

visit [www.qmscotland.co.uk](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk)

email [info@qmscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@qmscotland.co.uk)

or call us on 0131 510 7920



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QMS Communications Specialist

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## Welcome

**“It's been a pretty good spring so far, with lots of reports of more successful lambings and calvings than in recent years.**

The relatively gentle winter has also helped many of us lower our feeding costs and has allowed the tight stocks of silage, hay and straw to go much further.

From speaking to people around the country it's clear that we're all feeling under attack at the moment from many different fronts, and it sometimes seems like the non-farming public are all against us.

That's why I feel it's never been more important for the industry to stand together and champion all the good things we provide for Scotland - from looking after the natural environment, to producing the top quality beef, lamb and pork we are so renowned for all over the world.

Our advertising campaigns over the last six months for all three brands have been well received, and the most recent "Know Your Beef" initiative has really seen the whole industry pull together in a fantastic effort to get our message across. Thank you to everyone who played their part, and please keep having those important conversations with anyone who'll listen.

We must also remember that the majority of Scottish people strongly support our industry and are keen to learn more about where their food comes from and how we look after our animals.

Our Quality Assurance Schemes underpin the world-leading animal welfare standards we all uphold, and we should be telling everyone about them at every opportunity. We should also be united in welcoming the introduction of a pilot programme of spot checks to further strengthen the Cattle & Sheep Quality Assurance Scheme.

The QMS team is able to provide help and materials to anyone who'd like to engage with the general public and improve understanding of our red meat industry. Please just get in touch. You can also help by getting involved in the work of the Royal Highland Education Trust and LEAF's Open Farm Sunday initiative – both of which QMS is proud to support.

*K.A. Rowell*

**Kate Rowell,**  
Chair, Quality Meat Scotland

We have enclosed a flier from RSABI, highlighting the excellent services they provide and how to contact them. We are proud to support the important work of RSABI - more information can be found at [www.rsabi.org.uk](http://www.rsabi.org.uk).

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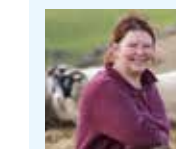
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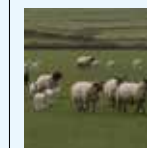
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This publication is printed on an FSC certified paper, supporting responsible use of forest resources.

Front cover image: Jen Craig from Normangill Farm, Crawford, Lanarkshire.



## Chief Executive's Message



**We are currently experiencing a case of uncharted waters for UK politics and this means many uncertainties for farming and the red meat industry, both currently and in the longer-term.**

The red meat industry is also facing unprecedented challenge in relation to human health, animal welfare and the environment.

It is therefore essential that we all work together to raise awareness of what sets the Scottish red meat industry apart.

A key example of this is our world-class reputation for beef and lamb and our partnership with the Scottish SPCA is extremely valuable and is, I believe, unique in the world.

We also have pioneering whole-of-life, whole-of-supply-chain quality assurance, farmers and crofters who take pride in their stewardship of the Scottish landscape and we produce red meat in a way which is a fantastic example of a sustainable food production system.

QMS continues to be very proactive in PR and media activity to promote and protect our industry and we have plans in place to build on this through marketing and PR activities during this year. We will shortly be announcing a "Meat with Integrity" campaign behind the Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork brands and urging those who work in our industry to really get behind that.

Inside this issue of Livestock+ you will see examples of how we:

**Support the Scottish Red Meat Industry**  
Scotland's Beef and Highland Sheep events; Updated EBV guide for Sheep farmers; and Meaty Careers video series

**Develop the Scottish Red Meat Industry**  
Grazing management feature; the North Ayrshire Monitor Farm

**Promote the Scottish Red Meat Industry**  
Scotch Beef marketing insight; New cinema campaign; SSP campaign results; and our presence at export events

**Protect the Scottish Red Meat Industry**  
Launch of environmental video; introduction of spot checks for assurance members

Please don't hesitate to contact me at any time. +

*Alan Clarke*

**Alan Clarke**  
Chief Executive,  
Quality Meat Scotland

## Flying the Flag for Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb Internationally

**QMS has been showcasing Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI at several high-profile international trade exhibitions in recent months.**

The Market Development team travelled to Foodex Japan in March, SIAL Canada in April, and HOFEX in Hong Kong in May.

At each event, samples of top-quality Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb were available for potential buyers and influencers to savour, and the QMS team highlighted the Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status of Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb, along with the guarantees of quality assurance, provenance and welfare that underpin the brands.



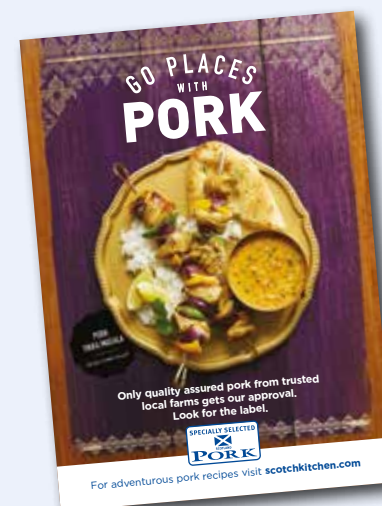
Emily Symonds and Tom Gibson from QMS's Market Development team

Tom Gibson, Head of Market Development at QMS, said: "Our presence at trade events such as these provides a vital platform for identifying and building relationships with key trade contacts, and for promoting the diversity of our exceptional Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb."

QMS's presence at these international trade shows and activities is funded by the £2 million fund of AHDB red meat levies ring-fenced for collaborative projects, which is managed by the three GB meat levy bodies – AHDB, HCC and QMS. +

**For more information on Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI including recipes, videos and tips, visit [www.scotchkitchen.com](http://www.scotchkitchen.com) or follow Scotch Kitchen on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.**

## Strong Campaign Delivered For Specially Selected Pork



**QMS's recent campaign to raise awareness of the versatility and health benefits of Specially Selected Pork has produced impressive results.**

The "Go Places with Pork" campaign ran in January and February this year and reached 94% (4.2 million) of the Scottish adult population through a strong combination of print, outdoor and digital advertising, PR activity, social media, influencer engagement and, for the first time, a TV commercial.

The light-hearted TV advert, which featured a family sharing photos of Specially Selected Pork dishes from around the world, was seen by over three quarters (78%) of the Scottish population. IGD brand-tracking research revealed that 45% of the adults surveyed in Scotland could recall seeing the advert.

The TV advert was supported by billboard and digital advertising, and complemented by PR activity, including in-store sampling in partnership with Aldi and Lidl, which focused on promoting the versatility and health benefits of pork. Celebrity TV chef Phil Vickery and Scotland's National Chef Gary Maclean both supported the campaign – as well as several food bloggers.

A key success of the campaign was that an impressive 4 in 10 of those aware of the campaign went on to make a "Go Places with Pork" recipe using Specially Selected Pork. The Scotch Kitchen website saw 40,000 users driven to the site for additional recipe inspiration and members of the Scotch Butchers Club also received "Go Places with Pork" recipe booklets.

The campaign received additional funding of £125,000 from the Scottish Government to support the Scottish pork industry's strategy aim of doubling its value by 2030. +



## Scottish Government Backs Scotch Lamb Promotion

**Rural Affairs Minister Mairi Gugeon has announced £200,000 of new funding to support QMS to promote Scotch Lamb PGI.**

Speaking during a parliamentary statement on supporting the sheep industry, Ms Gugeon said: "I want more people in Scotland and across the wider UK to buy more Scotch Lamb. Last year, we gave Quality Meat Scotland £200,000 to support its marketing campaign to promote Scotch Lamb, which saw a 27% increase in spend per buyer on lamb and a 20% increase in volume purchased per buyer during the promotional period.

"So, building on that success, I am delighted to announce that this government will provide Quality Meat Scotland with an additional £200,000 to support marketing activity in the coming year."

Alan Clarke, Chief Executive of QMS said: "This funding is fantastic news for the whole sheep industry and sends a clear signal of confidence in Scotch Lamb PGI as a tasty, nutritious ingredient at the heart of Scotland's natural larder." +



## Updated EBVs in Sheep Booklet Available Now! QMS has updated its EBV guide for sheep farmers.

"Using EBVs as a Tool to Breed Better Sheep" is an easy-to-read publication which offers producers practical information on ram selection.

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

You can download the booklet from [www.qmscotland.co.uk/publications](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/publications) or you can phone QMS on 0131 510 7920 to request that a hard copy be posted out to you.



## Spot Checks Pilot Adds Weight to Quality Assurance Standards

The organisations which represent Scotland's cattle and sheep farmers are backing a move by QMS to pilot a 'spot checks' visits programme as part of its Cattle and Sheep Quality Assurance Scheme.

With reassurance about the way animals are looked after becoming ever more important to consumers, the spot checks are being introduced to underpin existing measures in place to ensure the public can have confidence in the way animals in the QMS assurance schemes are cared for.

The support from organisations including NFU Scotland, the Scottish Beef Association and NSA Scotland reflects the value the industry is placing on supporting a robust and credible quality assurance scheme.

The schedule of spot checks visits will kick off in May and June and will initially be introduced on a pilot basis with a focus on farms which have, on several occasions, failed to meet full compliance with key risk standards, as well as an element of random visits. The existing process, which sees spot checks undertaken where concerns are raised about a farm that is in the scheme, will also continue.

"The Scots were the first in the world to introduce quality-assurance schemes to underpin our standards of red meat production, and we are very proud of what the industry has achieved. Spot checks will allow us to manage reputational risk and underpin the ongoing credibility of our brands and assurance schemes," said Suzanne Woodman, Director of Brands Integrity with QMS.

"It is important that we are not complacent, especially given that other standard owners are recognising the merit of spot checks," she added.



"This pilot is timely in terms of being able to meet consumer desire for assurance, particularly about animal welfare. It is in no-one's interest to have our schemes undermined by the very small number of producers who may let standards slip in the period between the formal full assessment visits."

**Spot checks will allow us to manage reputational risk and underpin the ongoing credibility of our brands and assurance schemes.**

Miss Woodman said she was pleased that the importance of introducing spot checks has been recognised by the organisations which represent livestock farmers in Scotland.

"This move will allow us to act quickly where we receive information about a member farm which may have let standards slip, as well as targeting those who we know have repeatedly failed to meet standards previously and carrying out random spot check visits."

Farmers who are selected to receive a spot check will receive 24 to 48 hours' notice that the visit is taking place. The exception to this is where a visit is viewed as more urgent as a result of special circumstances.

NFU Scotland President Andrew McCornick said "Farmers and crofters in Scotland work to the highest possible standards to produce top-quality beef and lamb. We welcome the instigation of this pilot and look forward to reviewing the outcomes along with other organisations."

Jen Craig, Chair of NSA Scotland, said that steps to add to the credibility of the quality assurance scheme should be welcomed by the industry.

She said: "With the consumer focus more than ever on the health and welfare of our livestock, this step is another way for us to show how important maintaining high standards is to producing the high quality produce our industry is renowned for."

Neil McCorkindale, chairman of the Scottish Beef Association, said: "It is important that standards are maintained throughout the year, and spot checks should ensure there is no complacency on farms at any time.

"As farmers, we are all busy, but providing the public with assurance that everything is as it should be has never been more important. As farmers, we should be confident for any member of the public or any organisation to appear on our farms unannounced at any time."



## Praise for Film Highlighting Livestock Farmers' Key Environmental Role

A powerful short film highlighting the vital role that livestock farmers in Scotland play in protecting the environment has been positively received on social media.

Launched by QMS last month, the four-minute film features Highland Perthshire farmer Martin Kennedy, vice-president of NFU Scotland, and his daughter Katrina, on the 680-hectare family farm, Lurgan, near Aberfeldy.

The film, which was produced as part of QMS's "Know Your Beef" campaign, highlights the positive environmental credentials of livestock farming in Scotland and the role of farmers in maintaining Scotland's world-famous landscape.



The film can be viewed on the QMS website - [www.qmscotland.co.uk](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk) - as well as on QMS's Facebook page and on the "MooTube" channel on YouTube.

## Open Farm Sunday Encourages Farmers to get Involved

LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) is calling on farmers and crofters around Scotland to consider taking part in LEAF Open Farm Sunday on Sunday 9 June this year.



LEAF Open Farm Sunday, which is supported in Scotland by QMS, is about engaging with the public on farm, building loyalty, influencing positive buying habits and generating wider industry support. By hosting a simple farm walk or open afternoon, farmers and crofters can play their part in this annual event which is having a huge positive impact.

Any farmer or crofter who hosts an event can access a range of free resources including flyers, postcards, gate banners, arrows and information posters to help promote their event. The optional free online ticketing service is available to hosts to help manage visitor numbers if they wish to.



Scottish Co-ordinator Rebecca Dawes encouraged farmers and crofters to get involved. She said: "Open Farm Sunday is a great opportunity for you to engage with the public with the knowledge that you are in control. You decide what visitors see, for how long and have the option to manage who visits you. Whether you host a farm walk for a few people or a full open day, with pre-booking or a just turn up policy - every event matters and every conversation helps bridge that gap between producers and consumers."

For more information about the farms taking part this year or for more information on how to get involved in Open Farm Sunday, visit [www.farmsunday.org](http://www.farmsunday.org) or contact Rebecca Dawes on 07792 467730.



# Beef Production Business Benefits from Rotational Grazing System

The additional grass growth and available grazing that has been created through a rotational grazing system has allowed Borders farmer **Giles Henry** to increase his own cow numbers and contract finish some steers for fellow Borders farmers **Charley and Andrea Walker**.

**G**iles is committed to improving the performance of his farm by producing and utilising as much grass as possible and becoming better and more efficient at growing and finishing cattle. Since beginning rotational grazing on his 110-hectare Oakwood Mill Farm near Selkirk in 2010, he has increased grass production by 30 per cent and increased the kg of beef produced per hectare by 25 per cent.

He said: "This March I have grass with an ME of 12.1 and protein at 22.3 per cent; you can't buy that in a bag!"

It is clear that Giles is making full use of his 98 hectares of available grass, clover and forage crops, but he believes he can become more profitable by reducing costs and simplifying his system. He said: "I was inspired by a message that came out of one of the monitor farm meetings – 'Narrow down what you do rather than trying to be good at many things.' This led to my decision to sell my 300-ewe sheep flock, enabling me to focus on increasing the output from the cattle enterprise."

## VIDEO ▶

The Farm Advisory Service has produced a short video featuring Giles Henry communicating the benefits he has seen of growing forage crops. You can view the video at [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org)



Inspired by what he has learned from attending Monitor Farm and QMS Better Grazing meetings, Giles is now one of 50 farmers in the UK taking part in the QMS supported GrassCheckGB project. This project will monitor and record grass growth and livestock performance on the pilot farms and allow other farmers to benchmark against them. For more information visit [www.grasscheckGB.co.uk](http://www.grasscheckGB.co.uk)

**"This joint venture allows both businesses to get the most out of our available forage resources and enables us to focus on distinct areas of production."**

A first-generation farmer, Giles has a good grasp of financial budgeting and cost management, which allows him to make sound, financially-based decisions with fresh eyes. He said: "I think the challenges ahead will mean it is better not to hedge our bets but to be very good at one thing."

He feels privileged to have had the tenancy of Oakwood Mill from Buccleuch Estates since 1996. The farm has been organic since 2001, and Giles also rents a 105-hectare hill, which he treats like a "silage pit", as he winters his cows there from October to April then rests the land during the summer months.

The rotational grazing system that Giles has established has brought huge financial benefits to his business. He calculated that he would have to rent 28 hectares of grass elsewhere at a cost of £4,500 a year to generate the 30% of additional grazing that his rotational grazing has given him. By comparison, the investment he has made in fencing and water troughs over the last eight years to support the rotational grazing system has cost a fraction of that.

Always looking ahead, Giles is planning to invest in a beef monitor system to attach to a water trough in the field, which will automatically weigh and record every animal each time it comes to drink. He believes that this will be a useful tool to help him monitor the liveweight gain of his finishing stock.

Oakwood Mill currently runs 62 spring-calving Luing cows, 50 yearling calves and 32 two-year-old steers, ten of which Giles is finishing for another farmer. The plan is to increase the number of cows at Oakwood Mill from 75 to 80, with the limiting factor being what the hill can carry over the winter.

Cows calve from 1st April, and up until this year have calved on the hill; however, Giles is planning on calving them in the fields this year. He explained: "The cows will be strip grazed and back-fenced. Every day, the uncalved ones will move forward while those that have calved will go onto the rotational grazing system."

After calving they are split into three groups, with the calves allowed to forward creep graze from as soon as they can eat grass.



**Grass production has increased by 30% and kg of beef produced per hectare by 25%.**

In their first winter, the weaned calves strip graze a grass and hybrid kale mix, before going onto fodder beet and grass, with an allocation of 7kg fodder beet and 1kg grass per 270kg calf per day.

The youngstock going into their second winter graze a grass, kale and triticale or wheat mix. Giles said: "Both lots of youngstock used to be on kale and silage, but the plan is to introduce fodder beet and triticale or wheat – so basically, they are on a grazing Total Mixed Ration (TMR). This will reduce costs against making silage. I have done a partial budget, which has shown that the reseeded and fodder crops should be more cost-effective than making silage because of what we will get out of it in the way of weight gain. There is also the advantage of having more young clover-rich grass from reseeded thanks to a more frequent crop rotation."

He expects the calves to gain about 0.6kg per day on their winter rations but said the compensatory growth when they go onto the rotational grazing system is tremendous, with yearling calves gaining 1.2 to 1.4 kg per day and the older calves averaging 1.75kg per day.

Calves are sold at 26 months to Dovecote Park, where they average 325 to 330kg deadweight with about 50% R and 50% O grades. Heifers are split from the steers at 12 months, bulled at 14 months when they are about 370kg, and calve at two years old. Because Giles has been increasing the size of his herd, he has not sold any heifers for a few years, but going forward, his plan is to sell some in-calf heifers.

As the Oakwood Mill cattle are sold in June, Giles has found he has surplus grass for the remainder of the summer, which led him to enter into a joint venture with Charley and Andrea Walker from Barnside Farm near Duns to finish their organic Aberdeen Angus steers.

Giles explained: "The Walkers were short of grass last summer, so I bought ten yearling steers from them and agreed to finish a further ten. They will all be finished this summer, at which point I am hoping to have enough forage to take up to 40 of Charley and Andrea's steers this year."

The Angus steers have done well on the system so far, scaling 330kg when they arrived on 1st July, and by the first week in March they averaged 509kg with the aim being to get them away in the summer at 650kg. Giles said: "The best calves gained 2.5kg per day on grass last year."

The arrangement allows Giles to utilise the surplus grazing that he has and also enables the Walkers' organic steers to be finished off grass

Charley Walker commented: "This joint venture allows both businesses to get the most out of our available forage resources and enables us to focus on distinct areas of production."+



# Rising to Challenges of New Role in Scottish Sheep Industry



It would be hard to find anyone in Scotland more passionate about the sheep industry and farming than the recently elected chair of the National Sheep Association (NSA) in Scotland, Jen Craig.

Jen has always known she wanted to be a sheep farmer and now, through her new NSA role, she hopes she can bring some fresh ideas and make a difference to the wider industry.

Jen farms 445 hectares in partnership with her dad, Andrew, at Normangill Farm, Crawford, in Lanarkshire, where they run 1,100 breeding ewes – 1,000 of which are Blackface. She is also a Scotch Lamb Champion, supporting Quality Meat Scotland's marketing and PR activity.



She explained: "At least 95 per cent of the farm is hill, with very little in-bye ground which we keep for the Charollais cross Blackface ewes and Blackies carrying twins."

Jen and her dad have improved the performance of the flock by implementing a strict culling policy, and the average scanning percentage for the hill ewes is now regularly over 110 per cent.

They have been using EID technology to measure the performance of their flock for five years. The system records and tracks the weights of growing lambs and also helps them identify any sheep that are underperforming. Jen admits that it is more useful on the cross ewes, which lamb inside, than on the hefted hill flock, but she still finds it a useful recording tool with the potential to do more.

They have a good market for their Blackface store lambs, which are sold through Lanark in the autumn when they average 30kg liveweight, and each year they nearly all go to the same buyer. The Craigs also work closely with their local vets and have a health plan in place which keeps vet and medicine costs to a minimum; they also use faecal egg counts to reduce the amount of anthelmintic and flukicide they use in their flock.

A few years ago, Jen and her father took part in the Prince's Trust Business Resilience Programme. As part of the process, they conducted a whole-farm audit, which identified key areas where they could improve the performance of their business.

**"It is important that the decision makers who design and implement our policies are informed by as wide a range of opinions and experiences as possible, and the younger generation are undoubtedly part of that."**

Jen said: "The audit made us much more aware of our costs and highlighted the need for us to streamline; as a result, we are phasing out the cross ewes, which is where much of the input costs lie."

The improvements they continue to make to the farm, including a planned programme of draining and reseeding the in-bye land, along with keeping a close eye on input costs, and maximising the performance of the hill ewes, should ensure Normangill is in a strong position to rise to future challenges.

"Dad and I are keen to keep moving the business forward and are open to change and new ideas. One major change that we are looking at is establishing a cattle enterprise, which we don't currently have. Dad is now at the stage of saying 'when we have cattle', so that's progress. We can't afford for our business to stand still; being open to change was a big element of what the Prince's Trust Business Reliance Programme taught us."

An HND graduate from SAC Auchincruive, Jen admits that she would never have considered putting herself forward for a major role in the Scottish sheep industry had it not been for the NSA Next Generation Ambassador Programme, for which she was selected in 2014.

She said: "The programme really helped me develop both personally and professionally, but it also highlighted how I, and other young farmers, can be of use to our industry."



After that, Jen became more involved in local farming groups and has been chair of her local Clydesdale Branch of NFU Scotland for three years. She has also been a member of the LFASS committee representing Forth and Clyde for two years. She said: "Getting up on a public platform and opening yourself up to criticism is not for everyone, but I have had a lot of support from both NFU Scotland and NSA Scotland."

Jen has taken on her new role at NSA at a challenging time for the sheep industry, with the uncertainty of Brexit causing concern for many within the NSA membership. However, she is looking forward to delivering in the role and is confident she is ready to meet these challenges head on. She has plans for quite a few changes to how the organisation is run in Scotland, working alongside NSA HQ in Malvern, to future-proof the organisation so it can continue to meet the needs of its farmer members.

She said: "I believe this is a good time for young people to have positions of responsibility. I would encourage others to get involved in their industry and try to make a difference. It is important that the decision makers who design and implement our policies are informed by as wide a range of opinions and experiences as possible, and the younger generation are undoubtedly part of that. However, that is not to say we don't have a huge amount to learn from the older generation – it's about a balance."

"I do think farming has a positive future and it is time we put our case forward. Farmers are being blamed for climate change, and we also have the vegan element to contend with. We have a great story to tell, we are a massive part of social fabric of rural Scotland – as well as producing nutritious food – and we need to fight our corner."

"I get a huge amount of satisfaction from sitting down at the end of a hard day and tucking into a piece of delicious Scotch Lamb, safe in the knowledge that that animal has been produced to the highest welfare standards and has had a positive contribution to the environment and landscape."

Scotch Lamb is a fantastic product that we, as farmers, don't shout about as much as we should."

Jen feels very strongly that a viable and profitable sheep sector is vital to encourage the next generation of farmers. She said: "I love my way of life and that made the choice to come into this industry an easy one for me; I feel it is part of my role to safeguard it for future generations, so others also have that choice."+



# Embracing Technology to Meet Market Requirements

Those with an interest in beef production will have an opportunity to learn about the latest technology to help support and develop their businesses at Scotland's Beef Event, being hosted this year by **Robbie and Barbara Milne and their son James**, at their **North Bethelnie Farm**, near Oldmeldrum in **Aberdeenshire**.



Inset image: The Bethelnie team: (l-r) Robbie and Barbara Milne and their son James.

**Ease of calving is one of the main focuses of the livestock policy at North Bethelnie, so heifers are all subject to pelvic measuring and the bottom five per cent are not retained in the herd.**

Regardless of whether calves are sold store or finished, Robbie said: "We try to produce an animal that suits the market we decided to target with our breeding, and we are very proud of the quality and consistency of what we produce."

Calves are all electronically tagged and weighed regularly, and the family are looking to invest in a new handling system to make recording easier. Robbie said: "The information we get from EID is great, not only for monitoring calf growth rates but also as a tool for finding the best performing cows."

He continued: "This year we will pick out the bottom 20 per cent of cows, and if they continue to be poor performers next year then we will consider getting rid of them."

The family has also diversified into contract grain milling. Son James runs that side of the business, and treats grain within a 50 mile radius of North Bethelnie all year round, although he is at his busiest at harvest time.

The Milnes believe it is vitally important to react to markets and produce what is in demand. Even in the current climate of uncertainty surrounding Brexit, the Milnes remain optimistic about the future, which is evident in the fact that they are increasing cow numbers. Robbie said: "There is likely to be some upheaval in the market place due to Brexit, and if we knew what markets we were aiming for it would be better, but I believe cattle will be in short supply in two years' time and I want to be in a position to take advantage of that. Also, people still need to eat!"

**T**he Milne family run 330 Saler cows and 70 in-calf heifers on their 200-hectare grassland farm, along with a flock of 200 breeding ewes. They also rent 120 hectares of grass and 147 hectares of hill seasonally.

The Milnes are looking forward to showing visitors around their cattle enterprise on Thursday 30 May. Naturally modest, they describe their business as "very commercial and down to earth", but it is obvious that they work very hard to produce top-quality calves, utilising technology to adapt their system constantly to satisfy the requirements of the market.

The bulls used are mainly Charolais and Salers, but more recently the Aberdeen-Angus breed has been introduced to the herd. Robbie explained that to reduce the workload the cows are split into early and late-spring calvings, with the first batch calving over a six-week period from January until mid-February and the remainder calving from April until June. Heifers are calved in November to give them time to recover before joining the January herd.

Keen to maximise their output, the Milnes have been increasing their cow numbers steadily over the last few years. As well as buying in a few heifers, they have retained the best of their Salers heifers and also some of the Angus cross Salers, which went to the bull in March. Robbie said: "We have always fancied trying out the Salers/Angus cross, which will hopefully reduce the size of our cows slightly without any loss of calf weight. Some of our cows are 800kg, which we feel is too heavy. The Angus breed is also naturally polled, which saves a lot of work."

Ease of calving is one of the main focuses of the livestock policy at North Bethelnie, so heifers are all subject to pelvic measuring and the bottom five per cent are not retained in the herd. Heifers are culled when they reach about 450kg and calve down at just over two years old.

Robbie and Barbara believe that it is vitally important to have a live calf on the ground, so as well as pelvic measuring females, they select bulls on ease of calving EBVs.

They import their Charolais bulls from France through an agent who knows exactly what the Milnes require in a bull.

Robbie said: "I like the fact that the French bulls are less 'pushed'; they are very good on their feet and legs and are easy fleshed, and they also calve easily."

Last year, fewer than nine per cent of the cows and heifers required assistance at calving and they achieved a calving percentage of 95% at weaning, although Robbie pointed out that it is not always as good as that. Barbara highlighted that the installation of cameras in the calving shed last year was a big help and added: "We can keep an eye on them from the house, so we don't need to disturb them in the middle of the night."

Robbie has managed to maximise his stocking density by paying careful attention to his grass. Last year he over-seeded 40 hectares with a clover mix, which has been very successful.



**QMS VIDEO** ▶ YouTube f



You can learn more about the cattle management system at North Bethelnie in a short film which can be viewed on the QMS facebook page, the QMS website and QMS Mootube channel on YouTube.



**Scotland's Beef Event**  
QMS is delighted to be a major supporter of Scotland's Beef Event, which is being held at North Bethelnie Farm on Thursday 30 May. Don't miss it!



# Caithness Farm Shares Insight into their Business Ahead of Key Event

The Sutherland family at Sibmister farm near Thurso in the Scottish Highlands are delighted to be hosting NSA Highland Sheep event on 12 June this year.

**S**ibmister Farm is run by Kenneth and Elspeth Sutherland and their two sons, Stephen and Kenneth, along with Stephen's fiancé Alix and Kenneth's wife, Fiona. The family has owned Sibmister since 1962, which, together with the original farm of Stainland three miles away, amounts to 688 hectares of grassland. They also rent a further 120 hectares of grass locally.

Stocking comprises 1,600 breeding ewes including 60 pedigree Suffolk and 50 pedigree Texel ewes used to produce tups, both for their own use and to sell in Caithness and Dingwall.

The farm also has 400 mainly Simmental cross Longhorn suckler cows, crossed with a Charolais bull to produce store calves sold at Quoybrae at 10 to 11 months old.

The stratified sheep flock starts with 300 Cheviot ewes, 100 of which are kept pure and the rest crossed with the Bluefaced Leicester to produce a Cheviot Mule. This is then crossed with a Texel to create the basis for the commercial breeding flock, along with an additional 200 Suffolk cross ewes.

Both Suffolk and Texel rams are used as terminal sires. The Cheviots are a relatively new addition to the flock, but the long-term aim is for it to become completely closed in the future.

Stephen reckons each breed has its own strength, but the various crosses suit the system, which involves the first tups going out at the end of September and then others going out every 17 days after that so that lambing is done in stages to make best use of the lambing shed.

He explained: "The Suffolk crosses and pedigrees start lambing at the end of February, followed by the main cross lambing in March. The hogs, Cheviots and a further 250 cross ewes then lamb in April."

Everything is lambed inside - for a number of reasons. Stephen said: "It aids management of the ewes and we don't really have any grass up here until May. However, one of the main reasons is predation; we cannot let anything lamb or calve outside due to the risk of being attacked by the ravens."

Although lambing takes place in general-purpose, straw-bedded sheds, the Sutherlands built three slatted sheep sheds last year to in-winter 900 ewes, which come inside after scanning in January. They are fed a diet of silage and, from six weeks prior to lambing, Harbro clover ewe nuts.

This might sound labour-intensive, but Stephen said: "We top up their silage every second day and we have adapted a trailed feeder, which we can pull behind the quad bike. This means we can feed and check 900 ewes in under 20 minutes."

The scanning percentage for the cross ewes is usually 180 to 190 per cent, with the Cheviots at 170 per cent, while Stephen is happy if 60 per cent of the hogs have lambs.

He said: "We select the biggest Suffolk and Texel cross ewe lambs and let them run with a Jacob ram for two weeks in the hope of getting two-thirds in lamb."

Lambs not retained for replacements are all finished, and the aim is to finish 90 per cent without using concentrates.

Lambs are finished on forage rape and Stephen said that in recent years they have focused on better grassland management through reseedling, which has allowed them to carry more stock and finish more lambs.

Lambing in February means the Sutherlands can take advantage of the early spring lamb market, with the first of their lambs away by the end of May, averaging £115 per head last year. All the lambs are sold deadweight to Woodhead Brothers, and last year's crop averaged 20.8kg across the board - with 60 per cent E and U grades. Stephen was proud to point out only three or four lambs were O grades.

**In recent years they have focused on better grassland management through reseedling, which has allowed them to carry more stock and finish more lambs.**

While problem ewes are tagged and not allowed back into the flock, Stephen said that they have not invested heavily in technology on the farm; instead they rely on good stockmanship, with the family and their two full-time employees all taking great pride in producing Scotch Lamb.

Stephen is a great believer in the healthy, natural product of Scotch Lamb. He said: "We need to do all we can to make lamb more appealing and encourage people to eat more Scotch Lamb. It is one of the most natural foods you can buy."

In 2009, Sibmister entered 162 hectares of rough grazing into an Agri Environment and Climate Change scheme (AECS). Since then, the business has planted 25 miles of hedges as well as creating areas of wetland, and much of their silage ground is under the Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland option. This means it has to be shut off from 1st April and they cannot cut silage until July to benefit nesting farmland waders such as curlew, snipe and lapwing.

Although this has restricted some of their grazing management, the income from the schemes has given a helpful boost to the farm's balance sheet.

More recently, taking advantage of the popularity of the North Coast 500 route, the family have diversified into tourism. Braeside Retreats opened this spring and comprises six luxury pods. Each one sleeps up to four people and has all mod cons including a hot tub and Wi-Fi, and of course, the spectacular views over Dunnet Head that the Sutherlands have enjoyed from Sibmister for over 50 years.

The Sutherland family's passion and dedication to farming and producing Scotch Lamb, alongside protecting and enhancing the stunning natural environment within which Sibmister sits, as well as the family's diversification into tourism, make NSA Highland Sheep a key event for sheep producers to attend this year. +



The Sutherland family (l-r) Kenneth and Elspeth, son Stephen and fiancé Alix and son Kenneth and wife Fiona with children Amy and Jack



QMS is delighted to be a major supporter of Highland Sheep, which is being held at Sibmister Farm on Wednesday 12 June. We hope to see you there!

**We need to do all we can to make lamb more appealing and encourage people to eat more Scotch Lamb. It is one of the most natural foods you can buy."**

Image: (l-r) Brothers Kenneth and Stephen Sutherland with father Kenneth.

**QMS VIDEO** ▶ YouTube ▶ Facebook

**Stephen Sutherland gives an insight into Sibmister Farm in a short film which can be viewed on the QMS facebook page, the QMS website and QMS Mootube channel on YouTube.**





# “Know Your Beef”

## Promoting the pride and passion of the Scottish beef industry

By **Kirsty Fox**, QMS Marketing Manager

This year's Scotch Beef “Know Your Beef” campaign proved a fantastic opportunity to really see the benefits which can be achieved through the enthusiastic support of those working in almost every part of the beef industry.

The fully integrated campaign was showcased on billboard sites, in print, on social media and through digital activity, specifically aimed at our target audiences.

For the first time in recent history, the campaign also included a TV advert. People working in very different areas of our industry, from vets and hauliers to auctioneers, butchers, chefs, processors and farmers (including some singing farmers), took time out to help us on the day of filming.

This continued throughout the campaign, and our sincere thanks go to everyone who supported us. Among them was Martin Kennedy, who helped us film an exceptional video showcasing our sustainability and animal welfare messages.

Several farmers were interviewed for features in the press, including Mintlaw farmer David Barron, Perthshire farmer Tom Clark, and Dunbar farmer Niall Jeffrey.

Our chair, Kate Rowell, was interviewed for a feature in the Sunday Post, and other features during the campaign focused on Edzell butcher Bel Forbes and trainee auctioneer Ellis Mutch. We also had great support from butchers along with chef Jak O'Donnell and the Scotland rugby players, who supported Scotch Beef's role as Official Healthy Eating Partner of Scottish Rugby.

While recognition of the Scotch Beef logo remains high in Scotland amongst our target audience, at 93%, consumers' overall purchasing behaviours are changing as they demand to know more about the food they put in their trolleys.

A recent study by the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) has shown that fresh red meat shoppers are a highly engaged audience, who value high-quality products, the origin of products they purchase, animal welfare standards and taste.

“Know Your Beef” was the perfect campaign to respond to these changing needs by promoting Scotch Beef's excellent credentials with regard to our world-renowned quality assurance scheme, the importance of beef production to Scotland's environment and economy, and our positive messages around animal welfare at every stage.

Working with our creative agency, Weber Shandwick, the concept for the musically themed TV advert was created to showcase that by working in perfect harmony with each other, our industry comes together every time to produce a world-class product.

The advert was launched to our industry through a behind-the-scenes exclusive video which was shown on the QMS social media channels (still available to view at QMS's YouTube channel “MooTube” and in the video library at [www.qmscotland.co.uk](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk)). The advert had its television premiere on Monday 4th March on STV during Coronation Street and Who Wants to be a Millionaire. As well as being shown on STV, the advert was screened on Channel 4, ITV Breakfast Scotland and Borders TV.

With QMS being Official Healthy Eating Partner to Scottish Rugby, the Scotland v Wales Six Nations match at Murrayfield was the perfect environment for us to engage with 60,000 fans.



Our Scotch Beef mascot, Hamish, was in the fan village before the match looking for the Scotch Beef Fan of the Match, and the TV advert was shown to a sell-out crowd before the match got underway. Those travelling along the Western Approach Road to Murrayfield will have also seen an 80 square-metre “Know Your Beef” digital billboard advert, which was specially booked for the big match.

Our 300 Scotch Butchers Club members all received a “Know Your Beef” promotional kit to proudly display in-store; it included a glossy “Perfect Steaks” recipe guide giving hints and tips on how to best cook and serve your Scotch Beef PGI steak.

In March alone, the campaign reached nearly four million adults in Scotland, and it is set to continue over the spring and summer – reaching an additional 600,000 consumers through cinema advertising before films including Wild Rose, Rocketman, Yesterday and Downton Abbey.



### At a Glance



Campaign reached nearly **4 million** consumers



**Focus on** simple recipes, cooked to perfection



**Over 190,000** impressions on Facebook and Instagram



**RADIO PARTNERSHIP WITH** CLASSIC FM IN SCOTLAND AND LONDON



**57,000** people visited [Scotchkitchen.com](http://Scotchkitchen.com) DURING CAMPAIGN



# Pig Unit Benefits from Partial Depopulation



**Conducting a partial depopulation of a pig unit as a means of re-setting its health status is not something to be undertaken lightly, but Aberdeenshire producer Kevin Gilbert has completed the process and is now looking forward to reaping the benefits.**

Kevin, a director of marketing cooperative Scottish Pig Producers and a former chairman of NFU Scotland's pig committee, runs a 450-sow herd and grows 700 acres of combinable crops at his base at Womblehill, Kintore.

He said: "I had two main diseases I wanted to eradicate from my herd through a partial depopulation: Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), otherwise known as Blue Ear; and Enzootic Pneumonia (EP).

"I opted for a partial depopulation, as the cost for a total depopulation would have been huge. It would also have interrupted the business's cash flow and made it difficult to source breeding gilts of a suitably high health status as replacements."

Planning ahead was key to the successful completion of the project, with the process beginning 13 months ahead of the start of depopulation. Kevin met with the farm's vet, Bruce Bremner of Donview Veterinary Centre, and Lysan Eppink of Boehringer Ingelheim to discuss the best approach to take.

For a partial depopulation to be successful and break the cycle of disease, all pigs on the farm had to be over 300 days old. Kevin therefore arranged for all weaned piglets and pigs up to 40kg from Womblehill to be taken to other farms for ten weeks for rearing and finishing. In Kevin's case, he rented accommodation on two units at Peterhead, one at Edzell and one at Auchenblae.

The sow herd, which would have built up a level of disease immunity to PRRS and EP, remained in place and continued to farrow in the normal routine. The sows and replacement gilts were vaccinated against PRRS en masse. At the same time, the replacement gilts were also vaccinated against EP whilst the sows were given an antibiotic for four weeks and the suckling piglets were given an antibiotic injection to ensure that all traces of EP were removed. This stage was vital for the partial depopulation to be effective and for every animal to be disease free at the end of the process. At the end of the four-week period, piglets were weaned back on site as normal.



Kevin said: "This was an expensive operation, with a six-figure cost. Some of the pigs were in bedded courts and it was not a cheap season to be buying straw. But it meant the cash flow was not interrupted and I was able to keep the staff on. In fact, they were very busy washing and disinfecting pens.

"As an extra measure, we cleaned the underside of all the slats and the slurry channels. It needs that sort of attention to detail to break the disease cycle. We started to depopulate at the end of May last year and weaned pigs were back on site in August. All of the pigs in rented accommodation were sold before Christmas."

With no young pigs allowed on the farm, it meant that the routine introduction of home-bred breeding gilts was interrupted. This meant Kevin needed to arrange for more sows than usual to be inseminated with damline semen so that there would be plenty of gilts available for serving before depopulation began and after it had finished. JSR genetics were used throughout the process.

Kevin said: "It was a big operation and quite expensive, but the target in the long run is to save money on vet bills and to reduce the use of antibiotics. We are already seeing the benefits of having healthier pigs. Daily liveweight gain from weaning to slaughter was 800gms per day and has now increased to 900gms per day. Conception rates in the absence of PRRS have increased from 80-85% to 90%."



Pigs have been the main enterprise for the Gilbert family for many years. Kevin's father, previously a pig farm manager, started on his own account in the 1960s on 10 acres of tree stumps and some prefabricated buildings, before moving his family to Womblehill in the 1970s. Kevin, who had been working in England, came home to help run the business in the late 1980s when his father was sadly diagnosed with a terminal illness.

**"It was a big operation and quite expensive, but the target in the long run is to save money on vet bills and to reduce the use of antibiotics. We are already seeing the benefits of having healthier pigs."**

The original farm buildings were demolished in 1998 to make way for the Kintore by-pass. This, however, proved to be advantageous, as it allowed Kevin to design the new buildings with loose housing for sows with electronic feeding. The business has continued to progress and introduce innovative practices since then, with all finishing pigs now on a liquid diet.

Although building up his pig enterprise has been his main focus, Kevin has always devoted time to the wider agricultural community without thought of reward. His efforts were recognised last year when he was the recipient of the NFU Scotland's



North East Region Unsung Hero award. Making the presentation at Turriff Show, regional chairman Davie Winton said: "When we are engaged in promoting Scottish produce at supermarkets in the region, Kevin is the one member you can rely on to turn up and do a sterling job. As a pig producer, he always goes the extra mile to promote Scottish pork."

Kevin and his family also support QMS with PR behind the Specially Selected Pork brand - including one of his sons manning Harry Trotter, the brand mascot, at Taste of Grampian!

Kevin has also been involved recently in raising awareness of mental health issues. In typically modest manner, he said: "I was happy to help launch a mental health initiative by Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, Robert Gordon University and others. It was thought a local farmer should be involved, and it turned out to be me.

"It was quite daunting doing television and newspaper interviews on such a sensitive issue, but I thought it was important that the rural community was represented."

Kevin is obviously a perfect example of the old adage: "If you want something done, ask a busy man."



## Diseases Eradicated by Partial Depop

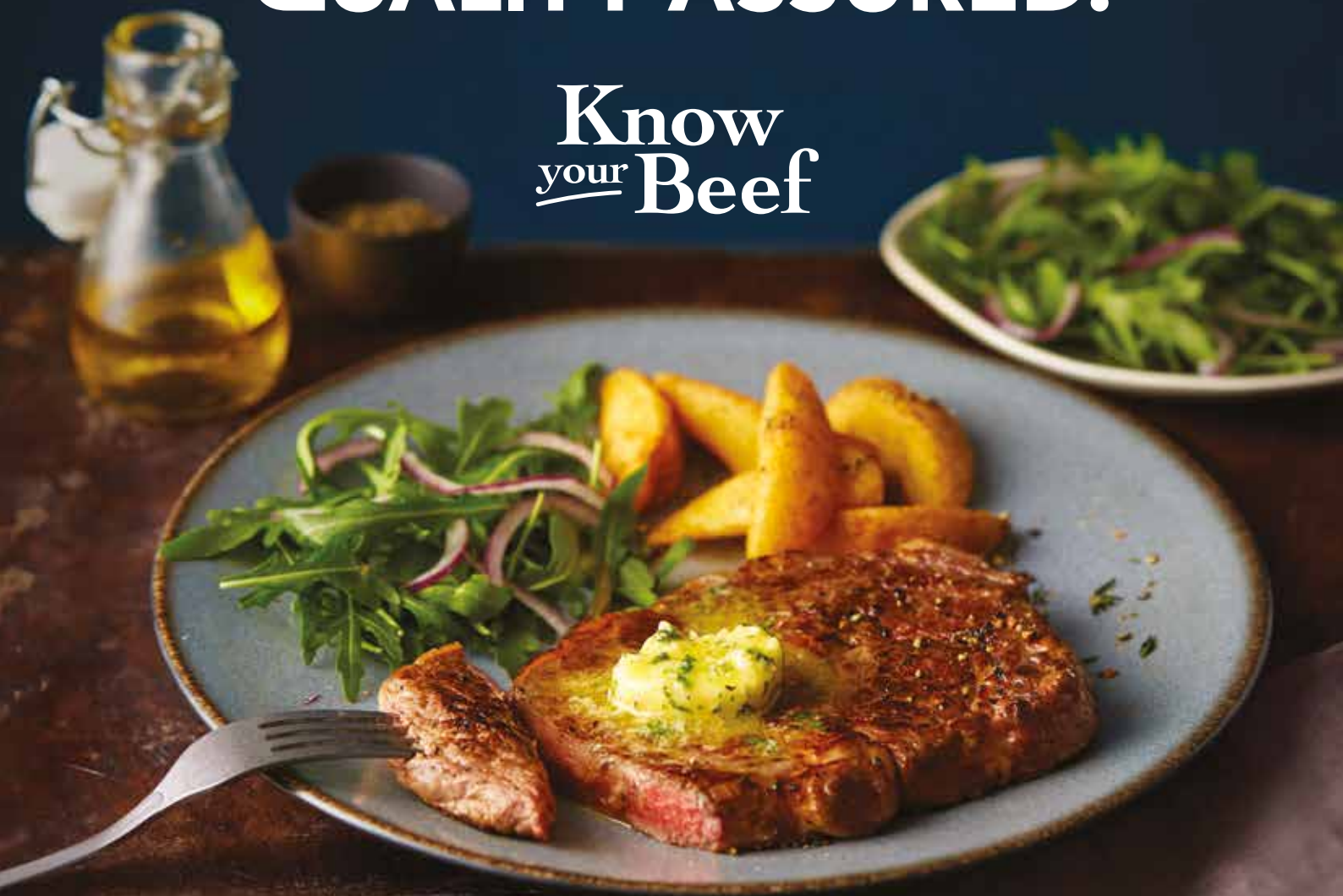
**Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS)** is a global problem. PRRS virus infects sows and growing pigs, leading to reproductive failure and respiratory problems, and to increased mortality in young animals. The disease is estimated to cost the UK pig industry around £80 per sow, £3.50 per finished pig, or typically £40,000 for a 500-sow herd per year.

**Enzootic Pneumonia (EP)** is the most common respiratory disease seen in pigs, both in the UK and worldwide; it is thought to be present in more than 80% of pig herds in the UK. As well as causing respiratory disease, it can also reduce growth rates. Infected animals can be treated with antibiotics and a vaccine is also available.



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