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QMS Sharing best practice from Scottish livestock businesses

WINTER 2019/20

+ Updates

FINAL MONITOR FARM MEETINGS
HIGHLIGHT BUSINESS IMPROVEMENTS

QMS MARKETING CAMPAIGNS
DELIVER STRONG RESULTS

FEATURES

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on Angus Farm**

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Reassures Consumers
in January**

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at Shantron Farm**

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Hazel McNee
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Welcome



It's been a pretty good autumn and winter so far, with unseasonably wet and mild weather keeping the grass growing.

Livestock producers up and down the country seem to be in a better position this year thanks to a decent summer and autumn, compared with last year, and the grass growth has certainly helped the livestock on the ground and winter fodder stocks. Many of those I have spoken to are going into the spring, and lambing and calving feeling well prepared, with cattle and sheep in good condition.

Unfortunately, this feel-good factor doesn't extend to many external influences affecting us all at the moment. As we went to press, Brexit continues, with the UK set to transition out of the EU by the end of 2020; beef prices are still extremely challenging for producers; and the anti-red meat rhetoric continues.

Quality Meat Scotland is working hard to support the industry as it faces these challenges, as well as the many others we are having to endure. We are helping businesses prepare as far as they can for life outside the European Union, with or without a deal, and working with stakeholders across the industry to keep abreast of how the changes will affect us all.

We have attended numerous industry meetings to try to address the multiple problems involved in the beef trade and have heard loud and clear the messages about marketing, communication and education that farmers have been giving us.

In direct response, our Meat with Integrity campaign ran throughout the summer, generating a positive response, and has been ramped up again in response to more anti-red meat messaging from the vegan lobby.

We are keen to help the whole industry unite behind some of the ideas proposed at these meetings, such as better collaboration along the supply chain, increased efforts to prove our sustainability and environmental credentials to both the public and government, and further work to help educate consumers on the health benefits of eating red meat as part of a balanced diet.

The small team at QMS is working hard on all these issues but is always ready to hear new ideas and suggestions about how we can do more. We need your backing to help us implement positive change. If every farmer went into their local school for a morning or spoke to a non-farming friend about the many benefits of eating meat and buying our brands, it could make a huge, collective difference. Please do get in touch if you have any contribution you'd like to make, or you would like support in order to do this.✚

K.A. Rowell

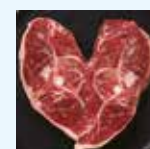
Kate Rowell,
Chair, Quality Meat Scotland

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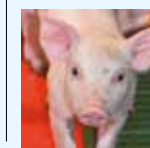
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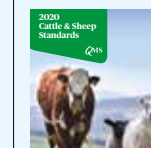
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This publication is printed on an FSC certified paper, supporting responsible use of forest resources.

Front cover image: Robin Norrie of Denhead of Arbirlot Farm, Angus.

Chief Executive's Message



Brexit, beef prices and some sections of the media have been keeping us occupied over the last few months.

The global fall in the beef price has been impacted by supply and demand for parts of the whole carcass, poor summer weather in the UK caused a drop in demand for certain cuts, and the onslaught of anti-red meat comments from the press continues.

We are undergoing a period of change internally, and the small team at QMS is working hard to continue to support, develop, promote and protect the Scottish red meat industry.

To help protect our industry, we have created a new Strategic Engagement department, and our new department has established the Scottish Red Meat Industry Resilience Group, which is made up of organisations from across our fantastic red meat supply chain, to ensure all interests and views are represented.

Working with other stakeholders, this group will help to identify measures which will increase the resilience of the sector in Scotland as we face an ever-increasing number of challenges. It will also help to drive the direction of our new department and the QMS Board.

You will see inside this issue of Livestock+ just some of the work that we are doing to promote our brands and encourage consumers to buy "meat with integrity". Our red meat sector-wide campaign showcases the hard work that farmers, butchers and chefs do across Scotland, and it has been well received. You can read about three great examples of cattle, sheep and pig farmers, Robin Norrie, Bobby Lennox and Fraser Shaw, who are continually developing their businesses.

We also feature Jock Gibson, farmer and butcher, explaining how he is using the Scotch brands to deliver high-quality products and use this as his unique selling point.

As an organisation we continue to work to promote, protect, develop and support the red meat sector in Scotland, and on 25th February we will host a free "Meat the Future" conference at Radisson Blu Hotel, in Glasgow, featuring world-class speakers from across the globe. Turn to page 16 to find out more and how to register for the event.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Livestock+, and please don't hesitate to contact me at any time if you have any concerns or questions about QMS and the work we are doing.+

Alan Clarke

Alan Clarke
Chief Executive,
Quality Meat Scotland

Final Monitor Farm Meetings Highlight Business Improvements

The many benefits and positive outputs of the Monitor Farm Programme will be discussed by host farmers at their final meetings in February 2020.

Nine monitor farms were established in 2017 around Scotland in a joint initiative by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) and AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds. The aim of the programme, which is funded by Scottish Government, is to help improve the productivity, profitability and sustainability of Scottish farm businesses.

Local farmers are encouraged to attend the final meetings, where the host farmers will update on the changes they have made on their farm and the impact this has had on the profitability and sustainability of their business. The results from on-farm trials will also be highlighted.

Attendees will also hear from community group members on how attending the monitor farm meetings has positively impacted them (some are not farmers but members of wider supply chain eg vets).

Kate Rowell, Chair of Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), said: "My husband Ed and I were monitor farmers during an earlier round of the programme, and we found the experience extremely positive. One major highlight was the networking and connections we made locally and throughout Scotland, which has had a positive effect on our business.

"I would encourage all those with an interest in improving their own farm businesses to attend their local monitor farm final meeting to hear about the hosts' highlights and lessons learned over the last three years."+



Monitor Farm Final Meeting Dates:

Shetland - **Saturday 8th February**

Moray - **Tuesday 11th February**

Lochaber - **Thursday 20th February**

Angus - **Thursday 27th February**

Nithsdale - **Thursday 27th February**

North Ayrshire - **Friday 28th February**



Programme of activity to reassure consumers

The Scottish red meat industry's exceptional sustainability credentials, as well as the important role red meat plays in a healthy balanced diet, were heard loud and clear in January thanks to a programme of promotional activity.

QMS Meat with Integrity Campaign

Meat with Integrity was put back at the forefront of consumers' minds as QMS relaunched its campaign to raise awareness of the quality and provenance of Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork following its huge success in 2019.

The campaign, which first launched on 29 July 2019, ran for four weeks from Monday 13 January, with a primary focus on raising awareness of the Scottish red meat industry's animal welfare and sustainability credentials which underpin the Scotch brands.

This new phase of the campaign aimed to reach over a million consumers and was supported by out-of-home advertising at 25 gyms and health clubs throughout Scotland, as well as online video advertising and boosted activity across The Scotch Kitchen's social media platforms.

All promotion encouraged consumers to visit the Meat with Integrity website to learn more about how Scotch meat is produced to some of the highest possible farming and animal welfare standards.

The relaunch also saw the return of some of the stars of the summer campaign, including farmers Hazel McNee, from Angus, and Bruce McConachie from Grantown on Spey, who highlighted the pride they take in maintaining our iconic countryside whilst working in harmony with the environment. Fife butcher Tom Courts and Glasgow chef Andrew Docherty also featured, highlighting the provenance, traceability and great quality and taste of the brands.

Lesley Cameron, Director of Marketing and Communications with QMS, said: "We were delighted to start off 2020 with our Meat with Integrity campaign – it's vitally important that we continue to drive consumer awareness of the Scottish red meat industry's exceptional welfare and sustainability credentials.

"With sustainability and animal welfare consistently important factors to consumers when they are buying meat, it's important that we share the processes behind our brands – demonstrating the Scotch difference."



Joint Activity by QMS, AHDB and HCC to promote the role of red meat in a healthy balanced diet



A range of activity spread across January, to help counter misinformation in the media on the role of meat in the diet, was undertaken by the three levy boards.

Although the vegan movement commands a lot of media attention, the number of people who claim they are vegan stands at 3% (AHDB/YouGov

Tracker, Nov 19). This is up 1 percentage point year-on-year, which is not significant. This is also claimed behaviour, and according to Kantar Usage the actual percentage of people (using food diaries) who are strict vegans stands at 0.6%, which is unchanged year-on-year.

January's activity followed a successful 2019, which saw the levy bodies begin working with the Food Advisory Board, coordinating expert speakers to discuss the benefits of red meat at health events across the UK, and engaging social media influencers in consumer-facing campaigns to promote healthy meat-based meals.

The bodies also continued partnerships with a range of expert spokespeople, whose commentary was distributed to national and trade media to ensure that evidence-based messaging around red meat's positive nutritional role stayed present in public discourse.

As Christmas memories faded and New Year's resolutions fell by the wayside, a selection of high-profile media medics shared informative content with their followers, highlighting the role red meat can play in combating tiredness and fatigue.



The programme also continued an already successful collaboration with Celebrity Masterchef finalist and family man Spencer Matthews, who has helped the levy bodies' positive messaging reach millions of consumers across the UK and beyond. This year, the reality TV star and entrepreneur shot three engaging videos highlighting the nutritional benefits, tastiness and ease of cooking with beef, pork and lamb, successfully reaching over 5.2 million Brits within the target audience on Instagram.

In January, Spencer continued to spread the word, talking with consumer media about his healthy lifestyle and the important role red meat plays within it.

The activity is funded by the ring-fenced fund, a £2 million budget from AHDB levy collections, used to fund joint activity with QMS and HCC. A long-term solution is continuing to be sought on the issue of levies being collected at point of slaughter in England for animals that have been reared in Scotland or Wales.

Having positive conversations about red meat

AHDB and Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) have put together a pack of support materials to help positively manage the reputation of red meat during 2020 and beyond.

It includes a number of key messages, assets and materials that can be used throughout 2020, forming a common narrative for industry. To download a copy, please visit www.qmscotland.co.uk.



Grassland Management Key to Success

Introducing a paddock-grazing system and better grassland management has seen Jock Gibson reduce finishing time by four months whilst producing higher quality Scotch Beef PGI.



Not only has this system helped Jock to create a steady stream of high-quality cattle year-round for his butchery business, Macbeth's, but last year Jock also halved his fertiliser use and is producing lighter, more efficient breeding cows as a result.

Jock, who farms Edinvale, near Forres, with wife Fiona, (and children Aila, aged seven, Tilly, four, and Rory, two) plans to move to 100% grass-fed beef to further strengthen the farm's provenance.

Edinvale consists of 40 hectares of mainly permanent grassland with a bit of rough grazing. A further 120 hectares of grass is rented on a seasonal basis.

Jock, who is a QMS Board Member and Chair of QMS's Scotch Butchers Club, has 180 Highland and Shorthorn pure and cross-bred cattle comprising 75 breeding cows and heifers plus followers, with a few Aberdeen Angus that he is breeding out of the system.

"We put the cows to Highland and Shorthorn bulls, and over the last four years, most heifers have been retained as we build up our breeding herd," explained Jock. "We are looking to increase our breeding cow

numbers to 80 next year, which will allow for a continuous throughput for the shop and give us enough for replacements. Additionally, it gives us more flexibility to sell some on.

"We have small flock of Hebridean sheep; we buy rare-breed sheep, finish them and sell them through the shop. They come from an island on the west coast, where Fiona's family have a crofting estate.

"It's something a bit different to market to our customers. Moreover, part of the reason for the sheep was to help improve grassland management and maximise grass quality. We also have a small herd of pigs."

Between 2010 and 2014, the herd at Edinvale was downsized after Jock's mother took ill. Jock moved home from working as an engineer in Glasgow, and has now taken over the farm.

"Since 2015, we have been building the herd back," explained Jock. "The aim when we took over the farm was that we wanted to become subsidy-free by 2020 - realistically now 2022. We have been looking at everything from how our animals graze, to how we maximise production off the land, reducing input costs and maximising outputs.

"We had an Integrated Land Management Plan completed, which has given us some structure for improvement. After looking at how we farm, we eventually managed to get a paddock-grazing system going. Last year, as a result, we managed to knock four months off our finishing time, and significantly reduce our fertiliser use.

"In the past we had to keep our finishing cattle for two winters, and because of that we were having to compress our supply to the shop to six months. By having two breeds on the farm it means we have got a relatively steady year-round production, without everything coming off the farm at once or everything being ready at once.

"We have been working to reduce the weight of our cows. Our smallest cow is around 450kg whilst our largest is 900kg. I can keep two small cows for one big cow, and I get two calves instead of one. Small ones are lighter on the ground, too, and don't do as much damage.

"I aim for an optimum weight of between 450kg and 700kg as I am only looking to produce a 600kg finished animal. I don't need big cows as I am not looking for big carcasses."

Improved grassland management has also seen Edinvale double its stocking density and halve its fertiliser use.

"The grass growth has been phenomenal this year, as has the increase in production per hectare," said Jock. "As a direct result of the rotational paddock grazing system, the beasts are quieter as they are being moved every two to three days. They are now more used to being handled, making them easier to work with. It has helped to reduce their stress, too, when moving them to the slaughterhouses, in turn meaning the beef being produced is of a higher eating quality.

"In terms of fertiliser use, we have cut the amount used on our rotational system by 50%, from 100kg per acre to 50kg per acre. We are also looking to increase the diversity of species in our grass swards, with a view to creating better quality grazing."

As part of the family enterprise, Jock's parents bought Macbeth's Butchers in Forres, enabling the company to break into the food services market, which remains a huge part of the business today.

"In the early nineties my parents added a mail order side to the business. They were also early adopters internet marketing which gave the business a competitive edge over the majority of other butchers," said Jock. "On-line sales currently make up around 30 per cent of our business and covers the whole of the UK."

Over the last few years, Jock has developed a pricing system for cattle sourced from the farm which provides it with a consistent return.

"It is important for us that we are not producing an over muscled carcass that makes it difficult to cut well-proportioned steaks and roasts."

"We don't pay ourselves according to the market," said Jock. "We pay ourselves a consistent price. When the prices are low for beef we aren't impacted, and likewise when others are receiving higher prices, we don't benefit from that.

"It allows us to manage our volatility and remove some of the risk. I have to take our cattle when they are ready. It's not necessarily when I want them, but it is a wee bit of give and take.

"We can iron out the quality of the cattle coming through and smooth out the price that we are getting and give ourselves a consistent playing field. It also means that I am not having to push animals to be ready at a certain time of the year because the price is good, so we can have a more consistent product quality.

"With regards to carcass specification, if we can produce a carcass weighing about 300kg, this allows us to cut an 8oz sirloin steak at an inch thick, which we would reckon is an indicator that overall carcass confirmation is going to meet our customer requirements.

"It is important for us that we are not producing an over-muscled carcass that makes it difficult to cut well-proportioned steaks and roasts. Equally, we need a good killing out percentage to be efficient, so it is a fine line to tread.

"We are producing an efficient, low-input animal and because of our own market, do not have to chase high carcass weights.



We are also looking for a good layer of fat cover, as it helps with the dry-aging process and it all adds to the flavour."

As another arm to the business, Jock offers a cutting and packing services to other farms and estates so others can sell their meat directly to the consumer.

Jock explained: "This is a growing enterprise and it's part of the business I quite enjoy. Whilst in theory we are doing ourselves out of sales of our own product, someone is going to provide that service for them anyway and at least we get to see what's going on with our competition.

"It's in our interests to help others reach consumers in the industry."

Jock feels that having a Scotch Beef PGI-assured farm and business adds to the fantastic story he has to tell.

"Through having this status attached to the beef, I can claim I sell some of the best beef in the country - that is our story," explained Jock. "It gives a level of comfort to our customers that we are producing a product to the highest welfare and quality standards, and when we improve our breeding, our grass management, and our feed, we are adding further quality to that product."



Change in Cattle Policy Reaps Rewards

Maximising calving percentage and maximising the kilos reared per hectare have been the key objectives at one Angus farm over the last few years.

Through changing their cattle breed and having a strict culling policy, the team at Denhead of Arbirlot has managed to achieve an average of 93% weaning percentage from cows put to the bull over the last four years.

Twenty-nine-year-old Robin Norrie came home from travelling in 2013 and went into partnership with his father and uncle, who had been running the farm which has been in the family since 1870. Robin is the fourth generation to farm there.

Denhead of Arbirlot is a mixed arable and livestock farm with 160 suckler cows and 70 hectares of cereals.

The primary aim of the business is to maximise the number of calves born, and by focusing their breeding and replacement strategy on this, they have achieved impressive results in recent years.

"We are aiming for at least 95% of cows in calf after 10 weeks with the bull. For the last four years we have had over 100% live calves born from cows scanned in calf, due to having more live twins at calving," explained Robin.

"We believe the largest part of achieving this is the breed; we are using Stabilisers – as they are naturally fertile, tend to be a smaller cow and have a good hybrid vigour.

"Our previous herd was a complete mix of breeds. Fifteen years ago we bought our first Stabiliser bull, crossed it with all of our cows, kept the heifer calves and built up the herd. Since then all the bulls purchased have been Stabilisers.

"With our previous mixed breed herd our weaning percentage was around 90 per cent, but we had a higher percentage of assisted calving and we had to help a higher proportion of calves suck.

Since moving to Stabilisers, calving is no longer a chore, which means we can spend more time focusing on other aspects of the business.

"Last year, we bought in 29 heifers to introduce some new genetics to the herd."

The strict culling policy that Robin has in place has allowed him to strengthen the herd further.



"We aim for cows that are around 600kg, which will ideally wean half their weight," explained Robin, who sits on the Angus Monitor Farm Management Group. "Ninety per cent of the herd do that comfortably.

"We have a strict culling policy – we look for the obvious reasons, whether that be for reduced fertility, such as not settling to first service or, for example, temperament issues – any problem cows are gone.

"We look to cull anything over 10 years old, as productivity starts to drop.

"Our ideal cow is one that is a moderate size and has a good temperament. We want her to wean a calf more than half her weight and which grows into a sound 400kg to 500kg bulling heifer at 16 months on forage alone or a bull that hangs up as a 350kg to 400kg carcass between 12 and 15 months on a cereal-based diet. For our system, that is the perfect carcass for today's changing market.

"Our average slaughter weight last year was 378kg and we are aiming to hit R and U grades.

All bulls are left entire. "We finish most of our bulls between 12 and 16 months. Since switching to Stabilisers our finishing time has stayed roughly the same, but the amount of concentrate the bulls require to finish has been reduced and the amount of forage for the cows is down by as much as 30%, meaning our carbon footprint per kg of beef produced has reduced dramatically."

Good nutritional management alongside the right breed is a key combination for Robin to achieve a good calving.

Robin explained: "We will bull our heifers at 16 months to calve at two years old. We run a spring-calving system from mid-March for 10 weeks. This year, 81% of them calved on the first cycle. The nutrition definitely helps with that, too. We try to ensure trace elements are right at calving and leading up to bulling. We carry out soil analysis on our grass fields every year, too."

Driving cow size down over the last decade has allowed the farm to maximise its kilos produced per hectare, which has also had a positive effect on the land with the animals being lighter.

Most of our straw is grown by us, but we also do straw for dung deals with a neighbour.

"Last year the average cow wintered at 640kg. About 10 years ago the cows were 100kg more than that. We are also keeping 40 more cows than we did 10 years ago on the same amount of forage."

"Benchmarking is an integral part of the business," said Robin. "We want to buy the best bulls we can and produce the top 10 per cent of bulls to optimise profit per cow-calf unit."

Weighing the cattle frequently allows the business to monitor the animals' condition closely.

Robin explained: "We weigh all our animals frequently including at weaning, calves at birth and calves at weaning. We weigh the bulls once a month through the winter and up to slaughter to ensure none go over the weight specifications. We also ultrasound scan all calves as yearlings to give us IMF, rib fat and eye muscle area EBVs.

"We also use condition scoring to monitor and manage cow condition throughout the year," said Robin.

"We want a cow which can hold its condition whilst still putting enough into the calf. A condition score of three to four for weaning time is just where we want it. The higher the condition you can bring them into winter in, the less you need to feed them for them to carry their condition throughout the winter.

Robin uses a range of benchmarking tools to keep ahead of the game. As well as using AHDB's Farmbench, he uses the Leachman £Profit Index to provide a profit figure linked to specific genetic traits.

"Benchmarking is an integral part of the business," said Robin. "We want to buy the best bulls we can and produce the top 10 per cent of bulls to optimise profit per cow-calf unit."

Denhead of Arbirlot's herd genetics have become so sought after that his heifer calves are allocated to a buyer even before they have been weaned.

According to Robin, uncertainty is the biggest challenge to the business. He feels that although there are various issues such as Brexit, anti-meat propaganda and the volatile beef price, the business is in a good place to meet these challenges.

He said: "I don't think in the long run these issues will necessarily affect us as much as some others. We are in a good position as we have focused on the fundamentals of our business, building up a strong herd focused on achieving maximum output, based on genetics that focus on commercial traits. This focus has put our business in a much better place than it was 15 years ago."





Rising to the Challenges of Extreme Weather

Running a flock of 1,150 pure Blackface ewes on a wet hill farm can be challenging, but when it reaches up to 2,250 feet above sea level, with weather extremes thrown in for good measure, that takes the challenge to a new level.

As well as the ewes, the Lennox family, who appeared in BBC Two's *This Farming Life*, run a herd of 20 outwintered suckler cows and two self-catering agri-tourism enterprises on their 1,500-hectare farm which comprises two units: Shantron and neighbouring Shemore.

Bobby, Anne and their daughter Kay work full-time on the farm, which is rented from Luss Estates. The Lennox family have been tenants at Shantron, on the banks of Loch Lomond, since 1750, with daughter Kay the 10th generation to work in the family farming business.

"We lamb about 800 ewes inside, including all of our twins and recorded ewes, as it's easier to tag lambs at birth," explained Bobby "Within two to three hours of birth, the ewes and lambs are

turned out. We lamb relatively late in spring, from the 17 April to 10 May, so the weather isn't normally too bad around that time. However, we are very vulnerable to bad weather. "When the Beast from the East hit a few years ago we lost around 300 ewes. Thankfully, we had a large proportion of the flock in for scanning at that time; otherwise it could have been a lot worse. We are still seeing a carry-over from that, combined with the dry summer and wet winter that followed. Our hill ewes scanned at just over 100 per cent this year. Normally, they scan at 120 to 125 per cent. If it doesn't recover next year, we'll need to start looking into it further."

"We wean fairly early for a hill flock – in the second week of August," said Bobby. "The lambs are left on the better inbye grass fields and the ewes put back to the hill, to give them plenty time to get fit for tupping."

Bobby aims to start selling finished lambs in September, with the bulk being sold in February and March, with average carcase weight of 19.5kgs.

"We put them away to grass wintering in early October and bring them back inside in January. We aim to get the first batch into the abattoir as early as we can after they are home. The remainder of the lambs then go onto pellet feed. We try to have everything away by the beginning of April. We aim to sell the majority of our lambs when the market should be at its highest in a normal year, which has worked relatively well most years.

"We achieve good confirmation. We aim for U and R grades with weights that I'm happy with. I don't let them go much higher than 21kg, since the extra weight doesn't get paid for. Fat levels are fairly low – I aim for a 3L fat cover lamb."



Performance recording

Performance recording the Blackface ewes has been a huge part of the enterprise, something Bobby, who is Chairman of the Maternal Sheep Group (MSG), has been involved in over the last 30 years. He initially focused on improving carcase weight, then carcase shape and is now selecting for maternal traits, while ensuring muscle depth and growth rates are maintained or improved. Rams are available to purchase off-farm and will tend to be in the top five percent of the breed. The MSG represents over 5,000 performance recorded ewes on 10 farms across Scotland, Northern Ireland and England. The joint aim of the members of the MSG is to provide sheep that do the job with less labour to increase profitability.

"I started taking an interest in performance recording after being in New Zealand in the 1970s. Initially, we started with 400 of the 2,500 ewes we had at that time. After doing this, we realised that out of the 400 half of them were under-performing, so we got rid of them. "We set up a nucleus flock and used larger cattle ear tags to be able to read the tags from a distance on the hill. Four or five farmers from across Scotland got involved in it at that time. We were all working with different indexes, putting different traits onto the sheep. We were all looking to do different things.

"Four of us then got together and set up a sire reference group that we could all use. We each took two rams to Caley mart and after a ballot, the two favourites were used to AI 32 sheep in each flock. This created the genetic link between the flocks, and enabled much faster improvement in the traits we were measuring.

Maternal ability now sits alongside carcase traits within the group's objectives to ensure the breeding females are great mothers while lambs are hitting market specifications.



"Areas of focus for the farm as part of the Agri-tourism Monitor Farm Programme include the setting up of the glamping business, telling the story of Scotch Lamb PGI."

"We also introduced Lleyn, Easycare and Suffolks alongside Blackies into the group. We are all looking to improve the maternal traits of our sheep flocks and work towards a common goal," added Bobby.

"More people are looking at groups as a means of marketing their end product. It's also a good way for those who are starting out with genetic recording to learn from others and improve their flock, and we always welcome new farmers to join us."

Agri-tourism

The Lennox family, ever keen to evolve the family business, were announced as the West Central Region Scottish Enterprise Agri-tourism Monitor Farm earlier this year, which Bobby says this been a fantastic experience so far.

The family have been developing farm tours and experiences for members of the public and guests staying in their cottages, including visitors watching or taking part in lambing, shearing, dyking and mustering. This proved a huge hit earlier this year, with plans to run lambing experiences again next year.

Areas of focus for the farm as part of the Agri-tourism Monitor Farm Programme include the setting up of the glamping business, telling the story of Scotch Lamb PGI through farm tours and exploring options of offering this to guests. As well as this, they are looking at farm succession and how they can develop a new profitable farm tour and farm experience business.

Kay and her husband Dougie are developing a new luxury glamping business based on giving visitors the opportunity to undertake a range of farm tours and unique experiences, which the whole family will be involved in delivering. Dougie is building the glamping barns himself in his spare time.

"I'm really excited about the future," explained Kay, who recently took part in the Scottish Enterprise Rural Leader programme. "As the agri-tourism side of the business develops and starts to bring in an income stream that is not dependent on government subsidies, it also gives us a great way to show the general public where their food comes from." +





Welfare Top of the Agenda at Dryfeholm

Whilst having a farm decimated by Foot and Mouth Disease is devastating for anyone, one farming family in Lockerbie turned this adversity into an opportunity to re-evaluate what they were doing and re-build their business even stronger than before.



Dryfeholm Farm, spanning 405 hectares, currently carries a 500-sow herd, producing finished pigs alongside finishing 150 cattle and 600 lambs per year, and is run by Colin and Brian Shaw, together with Colin's sons Fraser and Cameron.

Running a closed herd with high-health genetics, the team at Dryfeholm has built up the pig herd since it was culled along with their cattle and sheep during Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in 2001. The family is now an advocate for rearing Specially Selected Pork to the highest of standards.

Fraser, who starred in Quality Meat Scotland's Meat with Integrity campaign earlier this year, commented: "Due to one of our neighbours contracting FMD, we were forced to cull our pigs, cattle and then our sheep as well. We were completely taken out."

"That provided a focal point for what we were going to do after that. Over the following year we took time to assess the business and the direction we wanted to go in. We re-stocked with 200 suckler cows which we had before. We also re-stocked the pig herd with 250 sows."

"We place a huge emphasis on the pigs' well-being - we constantly check them to ensure these standards are maintained."

Since then, the suckler herd has been dispersed and by 2017 the breeding sow numbers had doubled. In addition, the business received financial support through the Scottish Rural Development Programme in 2009, which allowed it to build a feed mill to provide feed for the pig enterprise.

The pig enterprise runs on a weekly system with 24 farrowing spaces per week, aiming to farrow 20 sows per week, which leaves four spaces for fostering. "Every week we have sows giving birth," said Fraser.

The dry sows are fed on a Schauer electronic sow feeder which uses low-frequency tags and is able to individually feed sows all the way through gestation. There are four feeders feeding up to 80 pigs in 20hrs. Gestal feeders are used in the farrowing shed to provide a low-stress feeding system. The sow decides when she eats and how much she eats, although there is a maximum to avoid waste. The herd average is 14.6 piglets born alive per litter, with a weaning average of about 13.4 per litter.

The piglets stay with the sows for 28 days and then move to the weaner shed, where they stay for eight weeks," said Fraser. The pigs are fed creep feed and then two home-milled rations. During this stage, the weaners' average daily liveweight gain is 650g to 680g. This is a 150g improvement on the older buildings. "

After eight weeks the pigs are moved to the finishing accommodation, where they stay for a further 11 weeks. "When they move across to the finishing sheds, they are fed on two feed rations: one from 40kg to 60kg, and a second from 60kg to 120kg," said Fraser. "Currently the pigs average 120 growing days and a carcass deadweight of 87.1kg, equating to an impressive 890g per day.

"We are part of Scotlean Pig Marketing Group, and the majority of our pigs will go to Robertson's Fine Foods in Ardrrossan, with the cull sows going to QPP Ltd in Brechin. We also supply Border Meats, a family butcher in Lockerbie, who in turn supply other local butchers in Dumfries and Galloway," added Fraser.

The high health status of the pigs has meant reduced medicine usage, leading in turn to lower veterinary bills.

"We are conscious of our biosecurity," added Fraser. "We built a loading bank on the perimeter of the farm so lorries do not need to enter the biosecure area.

"African Swine Fever is just a ticking time bomb, and we all have a role to play to stop it coming into the country and spreading - we all need to be vigilant."

In order to maintain its health status, and ensure the pigs' well-being, the business invested extensively in its infrastructure prior to doubling its pig herd. Fraser explains: "We spent over a million pounds in 2018, investing in new pig buildings both upgrading and expanding. It's now an ongoing maintenance programme.

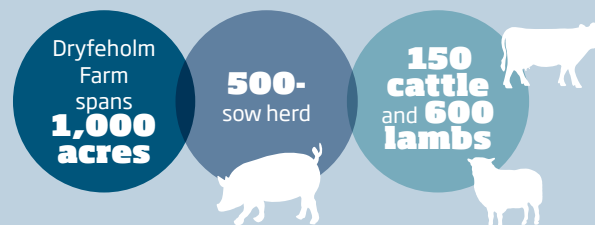
"Part of this is putting purpose-built sheds in place to ensure we adhere to high welfare standards throughout the rearing process. We place a huge emphasis on the pigs' well-being - we constantly check them to ensure these standards are maintained. This is reinforced with a committed team of staff, three of whom work full-time with the pigs while the others provide holiday cover and farm maintenance as well as working on the arable and cattle enterprises.

"In order to get our SEPA licence to comply with PPC when we decided to expand, we had to create a rural Sustainable Drainage System (RSuDS). We also had to do an extensive carbon audit and air pollution survey," he added.

All water from the yard and the roofs of the buildings has been piped to a sediment trap for treatment in order to comply. There is an annual licence to pay and the cost of installing the sediment trap too, which was not cheap, but in order to be able to farm there was no choice.

As part of the continued drive to reduce emissions, the crude protein level in the pigs' diets has been reduced. The feed mill has allowed the farm to reduce the amount of bought in concentrates, and utilise home-grown barley and wheat, with the herd being around 50% self-sufficient in homegrown cereals.

Dryfeholm Farm: At a glance



"We participate in a benchmarking group with other farms," explained Fraser. "We are keen to understand our business better, and taking part in the group and in other initiatives such as the QMS Monitor Pig Farm has given us insight into our business and allowed us to learn from the experience of others. One thing that the pig sector in Scotland is known for is producers working with one another and learning from one another.

"It's fantastic being part of the Specially Selected Pork scheme, and it shows consumers that we work to a really high standard. We are audited yearly to make sure that standards don't slip.

"It was also good to be involved in the Meat with Integrity campaign - we need to be more vocal and get our story out there about what we are doing for the animals and how we are trying to produce meat to the highest standards. We are trying to feed the country," added Fraser. +



MEAT THE FUTURE

Scottish Red Meat Industry Conference

Members of the Scottish red meat supply chain are being encouraged to register via www.qmscotland.co.uk for Quality Meat Scotland's free "Meat the Future" conference on 25 February at the Radisson Blu Hotel, in Glasgow.

The aim of the event, which will feature a diverse line-up of world-class speakers from across the globe who boast substantial social media followings, is to look at ways the whole supply chain can work together to support, develop, promote and protect the Scottish red meat industry now and in the future.

MORNING

In the morning session, attendees will hear from **Fergus Ewing**, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy, followed by **James Withers**, Chief Executive of Scotland Food & Drink, who will speak on the role of the red meat supply chain in achieving the Ambition 2030 goal of £30bn in turnover by 2030.

World-renowned academic **Dr Frédéric Leroy**, Professor of Food Science at Vrije Universiteit, Brussels, will then discuss combatting the myths around red meat and how the industry can face the challenges of the current post-truth era.



The QMS "Meat the Future" conference is free to attend (lunch included), but spaces are limited.

To register and see more information on the event, visit the QMS website: www.qmscotland.co.uk or call 0131 510 7920.



Fergus Ewing MSP



James Withers



Dr Frédéric Leroy

Before lunch, beef and sheep farmer and past Scotch Beef Farm of the Year winner **Robert Fleming**, of Castle Sinniness, will join pig farmer **Jamie Wyllie** of Ruchlaw Mains to showcase how they been working to future-proof their businesses by implementing a range of changes to become more sustainable.



Jamie Wyllie



Robert Fleming

AFTERNOON

The speakers in the afternoon session will highlight steps the supply chain can take to maximise their productivity and, ultimately, their profitability in response to the current challenges.

Dr Jude Capper, a leading independent Livestock Sustainability Consultant, who is passionate about the role of animal agriculture in sustainable food production, will highlight the positive environmental credentials of Scottish red meat production.

Dr Rod Polkinghorne OAM, Birkenwood Pty Ltd, will then discuss how the Scottish red meat industry can create unique selling points for Scotch Beef PGI. From his own herd, Rod developed a paddock- to-plate branded beef production method. Rod's unique technical capability and hands-on approach have delivered domestic and global innovation, and revenue growth at an industry and company level.



Dr Rod Polkinghorne

Laura Ryan, founder and global Chair of Meat Business Women and former Sector Strategy Director for Beef & Lamb with AHDB, will then take to the stage to share her successful experiences of networking and how this can be further utilised in the Scottish red meat industry.



Laura Ryan

Federico Stanham, President of the National Meat Institute Uruguay, will then discuss ways to maximise export potential. Uruguay is the smallest country in South America, with 3.4 million people and 12 million head of cattle. Sixty-five per cent of beef production goes to service export markets.



Federico Stanham

The conference will be rounded off with **Steve McLean**, Marks & Spencer's Head of Agriculture, who will speak on future-proofing the Scottish Red Meat Industry.

Alan Clarke, Chief Executive of Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), said that it is essential for the future profitability and success of the Scottish red meat industry that every link in the chain works more closely together.

"Our industry is currently facing an unprecedented amount of challenges; however, there are also many opportunities on the horizon, and it's vital that we work together as a supply chain to seize and maximise these," said Mr Clarke.



Steve McLean



Alan Clarke

"We've worked hard not only to bring together world-renowned speakers from across the world to talk about some of the challenges we face and how we can counter these, but also to inspire delegates and get them thinking about the future potential of our industry and the positive steps their businesses can take to ensure a profitable and future-proofed sector going forward.

"I would encourage members from every part of the Scottish red meat supply chain to register for this worthwhile and thought-provoking event."

Updated Cattle and Sheep Standards for 2020

Around 10,000 livestock farmers who are members of Quality Meat Scotland's cattle and sheep quality assurance schemes will have recently received this year's updated cattle and sheep assurance standards, which have been designed to be more user-friendly, with simple easy-to-read content that clearly explains each standard and its importance.

Over 90% of Scotland's breeding cattle population, around 80% of breeding sheep and almost 100% of significant pig farming businesses are members of QMS farm assurance schemes.

The standards behind the six QMS quality assurance schemes – which also cover pigs, feeds, haulage, auction markets and processors – are reviewed regularly and updated annually to ensure continuous improvements are made to keep pace with legislative, technical and other changes.

“Before any changes are incorporated into these standards, they are thoroughly discussed and agreed by the committees which oversee the annual review process.

Members of the cattle and sheep standards committee include representatives from relevant areas of the industry including farming, processing and auction markets as well as the Scottish SPCA,” said Alan Clarke, Chief Executive of Quality Meat Scotland.

This broad range of knowledge and expertise helps to ensure any changes necessary to meet consumer and retailer expectations, and to keep pace with technology and other changes in our industry, are also practical and workable at grassroots level.

“Although our quality assurance standards are predominantly used by scheme members and farm assessors, they are also publicly available to a wider audience including consumers and retailers.

With reassurance about the way in which animals are looked after becoming ever more important to consumers, confidence in these standards is essential to underpin the integrity of our premium Scotch brands,” added Mr Clarke.

The majority of the standards in the new document were already built into the assessment process of the previous standards. The key changes relate to a previous recommendation that farms receive an annual veterinary visit and that the annual review of the Animal Health Plan health and performance records is carried out in conjunction with a vet. This is now an official requirement.

After a successful pilot roll-out of spot checks, a further programme of planned spot checks is included as part of an ongoing focus on farms which have, on several occasions, failed to meet full compliance with key risk standards. The existing process, which sees spot checks undertaken where concerns are raised about a farm which 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 allow us to manage reputational risk and provide assurance to consumers, as well as underpinning the ongoing credibility of our brands and assurance schemes,” said Mr Clarke. +



New look, user-friendly layout

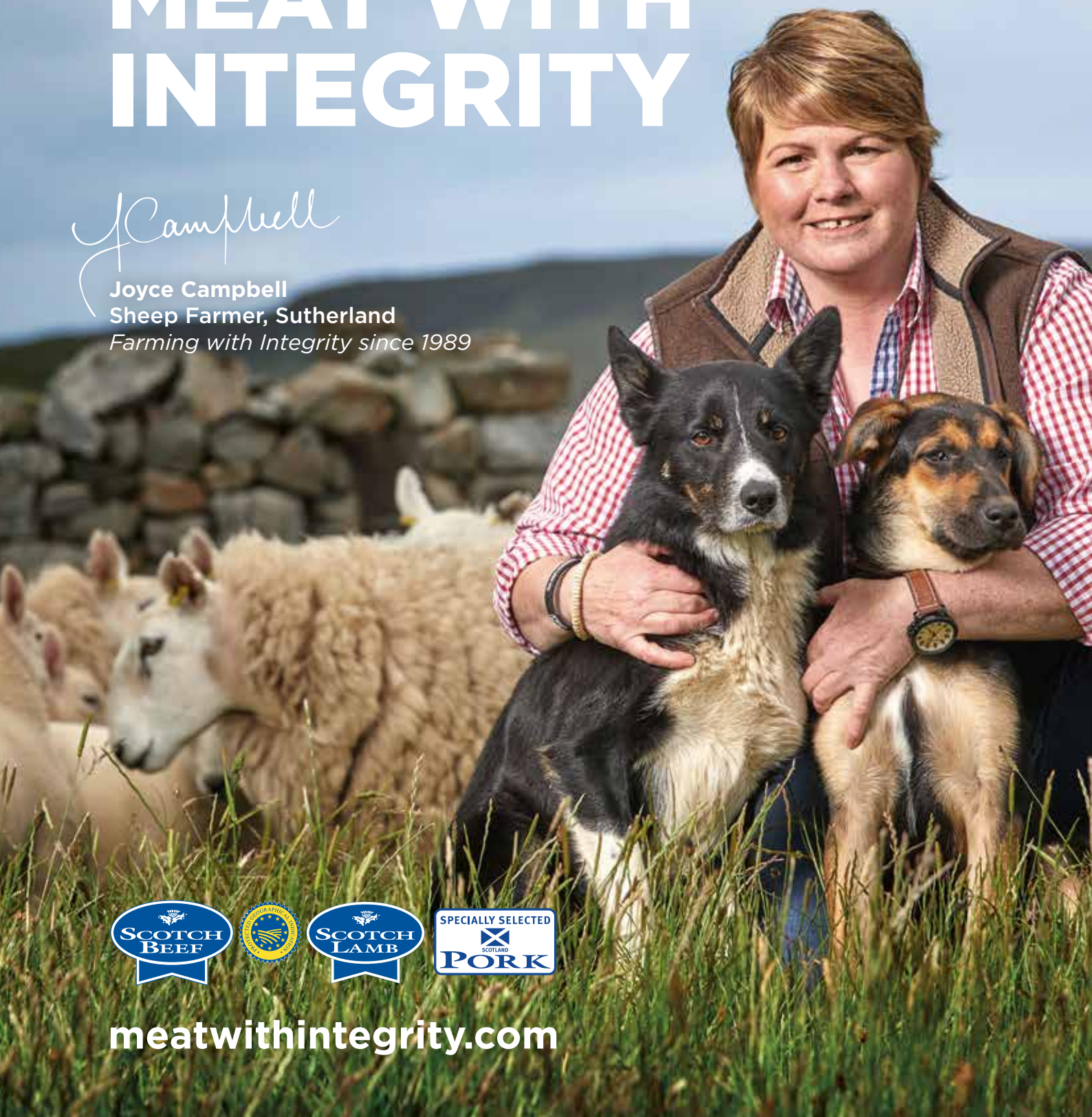


The standards are also available to view online by visiting the QMS website: www.qmscotland.co.uk

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