

Cattle & Sheep Assurance Scheme



WHAT IT MEANS
TO BE A MEMBER

QMS
Quality Meat Scotland

Benefits of QMS Assurance Scheme membership

Key Benefits

Quality Assurance isn't just about ticking boxes – it's your passport to more markets, a guarantee of trust for customers, and a way of showing the care and commitment that goes into Scottish farming every day.

As a **voluntary membership scheme**, choosing to be a member shows commitment to animal welfare and wellbeing and producing a quality product that is independently verified.

The Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb UK GI brands benefit from a strong export market and strong demand for red meat of proven provenance. Recent research conducted on behalf of QMS shows the importance of provenance as a Top 5 factor driving shoppers to purchase red meat. And, with people increasingly concerned about where their food comes from. Whole of life, whole of supply chain assurance gives consumers confidence of high welfare and a quality product.

Breeders can benefit from a **premium uplift** if selling store livestock. And while increased prices for assured livestock are not always guaranteed, being a member of the Scheme allows the member to **maximise the outlets** for their livestock to ensure they get the best return possible.

Scheme Equivalence

QMS works with other standard owners across the UK to keep key standards aligned. **Scheme equivalence** means that the high standards you already work to are recognised across the UK. That helps cut down on duplication, gives your business stronger market recognition, and ensures your effort is valued consistently wherever your product goes.

Being a member of the QMS schemes means **earned recognition from respected bodies**, an example of this would be the European export health certificates require a veterinary attestation. Thanks to the Quality Assurance Scheme's earned recognition status, any livestock that is quality assured automatically meets the requirements of the **European export health certificates**.

Traceability

Traceability Checkers mean that Members, Auction Markets and Processors can view the status of animals/holdings online prior to sale. Consumers and retailers want to know where their food comes from and guarantee that it can be traced back to source.

It is of **growing consumer importance** that food has been produced in a sustainable and trustworthy manner, and being an approved member of a QMS Scheme provides that **confidence on red meat**.

Assurance Scheme members get access to an online directory where they can search for members of all **6 QMS Assurance Schemes**. This useful tool helps ensure **Whole Chain Assurance** is maintained by knowing the businesses listed are also assured.



Assessments

Independent assessments carried out by a third-party Certification Body are a chance to showcase the members' livestock and talk over any areas for concern. They ensure that all scheme members are working to the same standards. The Scheme is not there to judge, but to support all businesses along the whole supply chain to be the best that they can be.

Assessments focus on key areas, which are set out in the checklist. Many members find that preparing for their quality assurance assessment also helps them have the right information ready should they receive a Scottish Government inspection. For many, the annual assessment is seen as a useful check to make sure everything is in order.

A Spot-check Programme allows QMS to manage reputational risk and underpin the ongoing credibility of our brands and Assurance Schemes and to act quickly in response to any complaint received. If you add a species to your membership, this can be managed with a spot check and does not require a full assessment.

Scottish SPCA accompanied assessments – Animal welfare and wellbeing are at the core of all QMS Assurance Schemes. The Standards are supported and approved by the Scottish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Scottish SPCA), which is Scotland's independent animal welfare charity. As part of the Scheme, the Scottish SPCA also carries out joint visits to QMS-assured livestock farms with certification body approved farm assessors.

Assessments and certification are contracted to an independent company (The Certification Body) which has no vested interest in the outcome of the assessment, reducing the risk of bias or conflicts of interest. This ensures a fair and transparent certification process.

Trust and market confidence comes from the Certification Body's accreditation by UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service) to the internationally recognised standard ISO/IEC 17065 for product conformity certification.

If a non-compliance is raised during your assessment, it should not be seen as criticism or a negative for your business. Instead, see it as an opportunity to enhance or improve the good work you are already doing.

Support and advice is readily available from the **QMS Brands Integrity Team** if the member is unsure how to comply.



Standards

As scheme owner, it is vital that QMS has a comprehensive and robust set of Standards.

The assurance standards are set by a standard setting body composed of farmers, crofters and other key industry representatives from across the supply chain.

Consultation with all members and key stakeholders is held prior to the full Standards review. A summary of proposed changes is circulated to members for feedback before any new standards are added or existing standards amended. Members are notified three months ahead of any changes going live.

QMS | Cattle & Sheep Standards.

QMS standards have existed



since 1990

and are continually benchmarked against others to ensure they remain some of the highest standards in the world.



Promotion

Promoted Brands

QMS promotes its brands in the UK and overseas. **The Assurance Scheme** gives consumers confidence that they are buying the genuine product, only ever born and reared in Scotland. Locally sourced, quality assured and farmed with high welfare standards. Our independent research in May 2025 showed around **90% of Scottish consumers say they would choose Scottish beef, lamb and pork**, even if imported alternatives were 30% cheaper.

Marketing activities

Our brands benefit from a wide mix of regular impactful activities, including TV, sponsorship, radio, press, posters, social media, PR and digital all devised to raise the profile of the QMS brands and increase brand awareness, positive perceptions and propensity to purchase. These regular campaigns typically focus on the quality and traceability of Scotch red meat, its nutritional benefits as part of a healthy balanced diet, and delicious recipe inspiration to inspire people of all levels of cooking ability! **Each of our main campaigns typically aim to reach around 70% of the Scottish adult population** and our brands are now recognised by the vast majority of the population.

Environmental Credentials

QMS actively promotes the low impact of red meat produced in Scotland on the environment and the importance of red meat to the landscape and carbon cycle in Scotland. Retailer partnerships ensure our assured products are stocked by all the major retailers in Scotland, and QMS works closely with retailers to maximise the visibility of our brands.

Local butchers are supported through our **Scotch Butchers Club**. This network of like-minded local butchers is provided with seasonal marketing activity and advice to help drive shoppers into stores and to increase customer engagement and satisfaction. And the newly re-launched Scotch Beef Club aims to support restaurants and food service customers who are proud to serve Scotch.

Working with teachers and communities, the **QMS Community Engagement team** deliver cookery sessions and supply resources covering everything from sustainable farming and food production to healthy diets and red meat career opportunities.

QMS aim to **futureproof** the red meat industry by working with schools, colleges, universities and other external partners to ensure that consumers of the future are positively informed about the red meat industry and the health and well-being benefits that **Scotch** red meat brings to a balanced diet.

Member Support

When new Standards are introduced, a 'What's changed and Why' document is released to explain what has changed and why the change has been made, to support members through the change.

Guides and templates to support members in meeting the standards are available on the QMS website, and members are welcome to contact the QMS team for an informal chat or support as required

QMS welcomes applications from new members who want to be part of our scheme. **The Brands Integrity team** can offer advice to potential new members on how to apply to join and prepare for their initial assessment.

Whether you have been in the scheme for a few months or many years, the Brands Integrity team is pleased to advise and support existing members in following the standards and preparing for an assessment.

To contact us

Email: brandsintegrity@qmscotland.co.uk or **Call Brands Integrity on:** 0131 609 0558. QMS aims to respond to all enquiries quickly.



Quality Meat Scotland
4 Redheughs Rigg, Westport,
South Gyle, Edinburgh, EH12 9DQ

0131 510 7920

info@qmscotland.co.uk
www.qmscotland.co.uk

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