

LIVESTOCK+

QMS Sharing best practice from Scottish livestock businesses **WINTER 2015**

+ *Features*

NUTRITIONAL MANAGEMENT
OF PREGNANT EWES

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION
& CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS
OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

Inside

Latest news, innovations,
case studies...
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UPDATES

**Aberdeen Farmer Maximises
Output to Boost Profitability**

**Paddock Grazing Success
for Dumfries Monitor Farm**

**Antimicrobial Use
in the Pig Industry**

• PLANNING FOR PROFIT • MARKET TRENDS • MONITOR FARMS • PIG HEALTH



1990 • 25 Years • 2015



FREE EVENT

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SHARING BEST PRACTICE

INSPIRE, INFORM, INNOVATE CONFERENCE

Thursday 12th February at Airth Castle, near Falkirk

Speakers:



Justin McCarthy

Editor and CEO of the Irish Farmers Journal who will speak about the Irish livestock industry and the techniques used to boost productivity.



Louise Urquhart from Aboyne

Maximising grazing potential to increase the kilogrammes of liveweight per hectare.



John Scott from Tain

Farmers Weekly Sheep Farmer of the Year - My sheep business, where it's come from, where it's at now and where it's going.



Hamish Dykes from West Linton

Host farmer from Lambing Live 2014 - How farmers can embrace PR to help promote their business and the Scottish livestock industry.



Niall Jeffrey from East Lothian

The importance of benchmarking and will share the process he went through before making the decision to expand his herd.



Stuart Ashworth

QMS Head of Economics Services

The importance of understanding the economic and technical performance of a livestock enterprise in hunting down profit.



Danny Miller from Caithness

My cattle farm; its resources, current direction and focus and looking forward in light of CAP reform.



Jamie Robertson

from Livestock Management Systems

Ways the pig sector has improved the efficiency, cost of the energy used and the quality of feed produced.

Email or call to register: info@qmscotland.co.uk or 0131 472 4040



The QMS "Sharing Best Practice" conference is **FREE** to attend (lunch included) but spaces are limited.



LIVESTOCK+

How to contact QMS:

visit www.qmscotland.co.uk

email: info@qmscotland.co.uk

or call us on 0131 472 4040



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WELCOME

“ A very happy new year from all at QMS. 2015, Scotland’s Year of Food and Drink, offers a fantastic opportunity for QMS, and indeed everyone who works in the Scottish red meat industry, to tell the world about our superb Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork.

The year ahead will also see QMS roll out a range of activities to mark the 25th anniversary of Scotland’s red meat quality assurance schemes, including a campaign to encourage those who are not members, to join. Scottish farmers were global pioneers of quality assurance and there is no doubt about the value to Scottish livestock producers of having strong brands supported by robust quality assurance schemes.

In this edition of **LIVESTOCK+** you will find enclosed our annual sheep and cattle farmer survey. We would be very grateful if you could take the time to fill this in and return it in the business reply paid envelope enclosed.

The information you provide in this anonymous survey is very important to QMS and the red meat industry as it gives a vital insight into a wide range of factors affecting livestock producers and their businesses.

Please be assured that the information you provide will be treated in strict confidence, will not be released to a third party and will be used only in an aggregated form.

The survey also seeks your feedback on this publication. This is our third edition of **LIVESTOCK+**, which replaced the newsletters previously issued by QMS. We hope you have found these issues valuable and the feedback we have requested in the survey will help us determine the future direction of the publication.

We now have nearly 7,500 followers on Facebook and Twitter and if you don’t already follow us I’d urge you to do so. You can also sign up for our free weekly e-newsletter by visiting our website www.qmscotland.co.uk or by emailing us on info@qmscotland.co.uk

We have a great line-up of speakers set to share their experiences at our free “*Sharing Best Practice: Inspire, Inform, Innovate*” conference on February 12th at Airth Castle Hotel. We’re delighted with the level of interest in this event and I look forward to seeing you there.

Very best wishes for 2015 from myself and the QMS team

Jim McLaren, Chairman, Quality Meat Scotland

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Rewards of careful planning



At this time of year QMS undertakes a structured planning process to scope out the activities we will undertake from April 2015 to meet the objectives aligned with our strategy of "shaping a sustainable and prospering Scottish red meat industry".

A planning day, involving QMS staff and our board, was held in early January to consider potential activities and also to look at the challenges and opportunities each of our departmental teams face.

This is my favourite board meeting of the year. It gives our staff and board the opportunity to share ideas and views on the best approach to delivering activities for the following year.

Something which is very apparent at this meeting is the extent of the diversity of the work we undertake across the industry. This ranges from marketing and PR campaigns that work to highlight the importance of red meat in a healthy diet, economic analysis and a range of activities to improve the efficiency and profitability of cattle, sheep and pig farmers. Those working in our industry have wide-ranging business objectives and interests, and among my top priorities is ensuring representatives from different parts of the Scottish red meat industry are involved in the thinking process behind our activities.

To this end we adopt a carefully structured approach to absorbing advice and feedback from those working in the industry. There are many examples of this.

Each of our six assurance schemes (cattle and sheep, pigs, feeds, haulage, auction marts, and processors) has a standard setting body with representatives from the Scottish industry ensuring our industry standards are relevant and appropriate.

We also have our Scottish Cattle Industry Group, Pig Industry Group Scotland and Scottish Sheep Industry Group to steer our industry development activities as well as a number of small groups which meet at least twice a year to improve the two way communication between QMS and the industry in developing and communicating our plans for marketing activity. These groups currently operate as marketing strategy groups for Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb, Specially Selected Pork and butchers.

My thanks, on behalf of the QMS team, to all those who help us focus our activities for the maximum benefit of the industry.✚

Uel Morton

Uel Morton,
Chief Executive
Quality Meat Scotland

Butchers Inspire Youngsters at Skills Scotland Event

Scottish butchers joined QMS recently to increase awareness among younger people of the wide range of career options available in the Scottish red meat industry.



QMS, along with four other organisations exhibited at three Skills Scotland events in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow in November - the biggest skills and careers events series for 14-19 year olds in Scotland.

At the Edinburgh event, John Saunderson (pictured left) from High Class Family Butchers, held Scotch Beef PGI burger-making demonstrations and outlined the various career options available in the red meat supply chain. His enthusiasm contributed to the QMS stand being voted the 'best stand' by those who attended.✚



There are over

700
independent butchers shops in
Scotland employing more than
3500 people



Scotch Butchers Club members are quality independent butchers who use only approved suppliers as a source for Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork.

300
members in
Scotland

65
members
in rest of
UK

Search on for Scottish Farming's Young Bright Sparks

Young people involved in agriculture in Scotland are being offered the chance to win up to £1,000 to develop an innovative idea, in an initiative launched by QMS, Campbell Dallas Chartered Accountants and the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs (SAYFC).

The new award, open to young people under 30 years old, was launched at the SAYFC's first Rural Affairs and Agriculture Conference. The initiative is aimed at encouraging young people to develop "bright spark" ideas which could be of benefit to the Scottish livestock industry.

"This initiative is aimed at showcasing the innovation, passion and commitment to Scottish farming shown by the young people who are part of our industry," said Jim McLaren, QMS Chairman.

"Our aim is to attract a wide range of entrants of varying ages across Scotland and we look forward to receiving entries where the applicants have clearly thought

'outside the box' to improve efficiency or profitability which could in some way benefit the business they are involved in and potentially the wider industry."

Applicants are being asked to enter by sending up to 200 words about their "Bright Spark" idea with the option of a supporting picture. Alternatively, they can enter by creating a short video (of no more than two minutes) explaining why their idea should win the award.

The judging panel will review the entries based on: evidence of innovative idea/s to improve efficiency and/or profitability of the business; and the passion and enthusiasm shown by entrant. Where relevant, the judges will also be looking to ensure evidence of a high level of health and welfare for farmers and livestock.



The closing date for applications is 27 March 2015 and entries should be sent to info@qmscotland.co.uk. The winner will be announced in June 2015.+



Scottish Red Meat Exporters Confident of Opportunities

The Scottish red meat exporters who attended one of the world's largest food fairs in France in October appeared confident there are opportunities for growth on the export scene.

Speaking at SIAL in Paris, Jim McLaren, Chairman of QMS, revealed that despite challenging economic conditions Scotland's exports of red meat have continued to increase during the past year.

The annual survey of Scottish red meat exporters by QMS has revealed an encouraging increase in the value of exports, which are up by 4.4 percent for the year ending September 2014 to approximately £81.4 million. This compares with around £78 million last year.

Jim said it was vital that the Scottish industry continues to meet the demands of overseas markets for top quality produce. However, he also drew attention to the



importance of export markets in terms of optimising returns for the entire carcass.

"While there is demand from overseas customers for the very top end of quality products from Scotland there is also encouraging volume demand from overseas markets for fifth quarter and lower value products. This is good news in terms of optimising returns for the whole carcass," said Jim.

The steady increase in demand for Scottish products overseas should send out a positive signal to livestock producers for the long-term, he added.

QMS announced a refreshed export strategy in October 2011, and three years on the results are, he said, very encouraging. The shift in strategy involved focusing on developing opportunities in Germany and

the Nordics, along with the existing well-established target markets of France, Italy and Benelux. Feedback from the main Scottish processors involved in exports, revealed that France is still the main importer of red meat from Scotland, accounting for 46 percent of total exports.

The other main countries importing from Scotland are Belgium and The Netherlands, together accounting for 24 percent, Italy at 15 percent and the Nordic countries at 6 percent.+

Image: From left Uel Morton, QMS Chief Executive, Liz Truss, UK Environment Minister and Jim McLaren, QMS Chairman.

Lamb Sales Increase by 11% Following Scotch Lamb Campaign

Retail sales of lamb in Scotland, particularly Scotch Lamb PGI, were boosted by 11% following a recent campaign by QMS.

The increase, driven by an award-winning QMS advertising campaign – Wham Bam Thank You Lamb – increased demand by an extra 87 tonnes of lamb over the 12 week activity.

“Independent research reveals that it was not only those who are lamb-eaters who bought more lamb than last year during the campaign period but also new consumers who don’t usually buy lamb even once a year,” said Laurent Vernet, QMS Head of Marketing.

“It is estimated that an extra 28,800 Scottish households bought lamb between August and October. The research also shows that the increase of volume retailed during our promotional campaign was not driven by price promotion, as average lamb retail prices remained stable in Scotland during our campaign.”

A key objective of the campaign - aimed at more than 3.6 million people - was to encourage consumers to understand the versatility, simplicity and speed of cooking with lamb.

The three-month long activation featured billboard, press and radio advertising as well as on-line and in-store activity including 165 days of activity by Scotch Lambassadors in Tesco and Asda.



“It is estimated that an extra 28,800 Scottish households bought lamb between August and October.”

An exciting, new component was a “Love Scotch Lamb Weekend” which took place on August 23rd and 24th. The weekend, organised jointly by QMS, NFU Scotland and the National Sheep Association, saw sheep farmers heading into town centres and retailers to meet consumers and encourage them to sample top quality Scotch Lamb.

Historically, Scotland has consumed less lamb than other parts of Great Britain. Around 4,175 tonnes of lamb (worth around £35.6 million) is eaten each year in Scotland with about 44% of the population purchasing lamb at least once in the last year (versus 57.5% in GB).

“QMS prioritises its promotional activities to support lamb consumption in Scotland,” said Laurent. “As Scotland represents 8.3% of the British population, if Scottish consumers were to purchase 8.3% of the total volume of lamb retailed in Great Britain, it would mean Scotland would need to increase its consumption by a further 2,300 tonnes of lamb, (the equivalent of 261,000 lambs) each year.” The challenge the industry faces, Laurent added, is not that consumers have a poor opinion of Scotch Lamb PGI, which is trusted and rated highly by 85% of the Scottish population.

“It is more than just lamb not being on the shopper’s radar. Over the years space on retailer’s shelves has been reduced so it is more difficult for consumers to be tempted to make an impulse purchase of lamb.”

Retail price has also been a barrier for consumers hit by the economic downturn, as lamb is one of the most expensive proteins available to consumers.✚

“Love Scotch Lamb Weekend” sampling activity in Inverness.



Borders Farm is Scotch Beef Farm of the Year

A Berwickshire farm, run by a dedicated family committed to producing top quality Scotch Beef PGI, has been unveiled as the 2014 Scotch Beef Farm of the Year.

Wedderlie Farm, a 2,500 acre unit run by John and Marion Tilson and their daughter Wanda Hobbs, was announced as the overall winner by Rural Affairs Secretary, Richard Lochhead, during a presentation at AgriScot. The aim of the annual award, run by AgriScot and QMS is to showcase excellence in the production of cattle in Scotland and raise the profile of the dedication and stock management skills behind the production of Scotch Beef.

The other four finalists were: Glenkilrie Farm, near Blairgowrie in Perthshire, run by David Houstoun; West Meikle Pinkerton Farm near Dunbar, East Lothian, run by James Gilchrist along with his father Jim and brother David; and Wester Bonhard Farm near Scone in Perthshire run by Graham Cameron, his father Sandy and mother Ann.✚

Winners and finalists of the Scotch Beef Farm of the Year 2014 at AgriScot.

QMS Enterprise Costings 2014 Launched

Most cattle and sheep businesses saw an improvement in their margins during 2013, according to QMS's latest Enterprise Costings Report. "Cattle and Sheep Enterprise Profitability in Scotland 2014", summarises the results of a survey of Scottish beef and sheep producers during the 2013 calf and lamb crop year.



The survey was undertaken by SAC Consulting, part of SRUC, Scotland's Rural College.

"The very challenging weather of spring 2013 impacted heavily on mortality during hill sheep and suckler herds' lambing and calving and resulted in considerable feed and forage expense for all herds and flocks," observed Stuart Ashworth, QMS Head of Economics Services.

"However, market prices for all classes of stock covered by the survey did increase substantially during 2013," Mr Ashworth added. "Furthermore, the improved weather conditions of the second half of 2013 also meant that animals thrived better than in 2012 and tended to be sold at higher weights.

Looking at suckler herd performance, the survey results highlighted the difficulty in achieving a positive margin from the market place. One third of the suckler herds surveyed reported a positive net margin from which to pay family labour and reward the risk capital invested in the business - an improvement from 22% last year.

"Margins were maintained more easily among store cattle finishers where 72% of businesses surveyed achieved a

positive net margin, up from the 59% who met this objective last year.

Looking at hill sheep businesses, the difficult weather conditions in early 2013 resulted in a general deterioration in hill ewe margins, with only 10% of hill flocks returning a positive margin, down from 19% last year and 57% two years ago. 45% of upland flocks recorded a positive net margin, unchanged from last year, while 83% of those surveyed running lowground flocks recorded a positive margin, unchanged from last year.

Just over three quarters of the store lamb finishers achieved a positive net margin compared to 50% last year.

The survey highlighted that there were signs of a significant increase in producers' drive to improve their technical knowledge and the application of science. "They are recognising that the success of their businesses long-term will be most influenced by their ability to make the best use of their land resource rather than CAP support," said Mr Ashworth.✚

✚ View the publication online at www.qmscotland.co.uk or hard copies can be ordered by calling QMS on 0131 472 4040.

Scotch Beef PGI Named Scotland's Favourite Food!

Farmers, butchers and processors throughout Scotland are celebrating the news that Scotch Beef PGI has been revealed as the nation's favourite Scottish food.

The research was commissioned by "2014 Food & Drink", the campaign dedicated to promoting Scottish food and drink producers during 2014. The YouGov poll to celebrate Scottish Food Heroes, revealed the Scottish public's number one food is Scotch Beef PGI.

To qualify to be sold as Scotch Beef, meat must come from cattle that have been born, reared and slaughtered in Scotland. The brand is also underpinned by Quality Meat Scotland's quality assurance schemes which ensure high standards of production and animal welfare.



Scotch Beef has European Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status which guarantees authenticity and puts it in the same category as Champagne and Parma ham. Coming a close second in the poll was national dish haggis (13%) with Scotch Lamb, which also has coveted PGI status guaranteeing its provenance and quality, voted the country's sixth most popular food. The majority of the public believe in buying local with 66% saying that it is important to them that the food they eat is produced in Scotland.

Jim McLaren, Chairman of QMS, welcomed the news ahead of Scotland's Year of Food and Drink 2015. "This is a fantastic boost for the Scottish red meat industry and all those who work so hard to bring top quality Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork to the table here in Scotland and around the globe.

QMS's award-winning marketing campaigns have succeeded in raising recognition of the Scotch Beef PGI brand to 91% in Scotland and 49% in Greater London. The organisation has also focused on increasing consumers' awareness of what the Scotch Beef, Scotch Lamb and Specially Selected Pork labels stand for.✚



MAXIMISING OUTPUT IS KEY TO PROFITABILITY

Meticulous record keeping and attention to detail has enabled a north-east producer to maximise his output per hectare across his range of enterprises.

According to David Stephen, who farms at Redhouse of Barra near Oldmeldrum, the key to profitability is “maximising the output per hectare of land whatever you are producing.” A key to success in this objective, said David, is a strong grasp of all the inputs and outputs of an enterprise. David was one of the hosts of a series of farm visits across Scotland undertaken as part of the “Planning for Profit” initiative.

Planning for Profit aims to help farmers ensure their businesses are competitive and well placed to take advantage of the opportunities ahead, and that they operate profitably with a reduction in support payments. The initiative is supported by QMS, the Scottish Government’s Skills Development Scheme and NFU Scotland.

David farms 263 ha, with a mix of cattle, sheep, cereals and soft fruit enterprises.

He has recently reduced the cereal growing enterprise from 121 ha to 40 ha and increased his livestock enterprises, in order to justify employing a full-time stockman and shepherd.

The sizeable cattle enterprise is designed to be simple and practical, allowing one man to handle the stock. The herd comprises 260 Simmental and Limousin cross suckler cows, which are split into spring and autumn calvers.

David believes that it is key to have a strong grasp of all the inputs and outputs of an enterprise.



Planning for Profit Case Study: Search YouTube for 'Planning for Profit'



"By increasing the kilogrammes produced he will dilute the fixed costs and, therefore, increase profitability."

All the calves are finished on farm, with the males left entire. They are fed a forage-based total mixed ration (TMR) of silage, straw, draff and barley. The barley is treated with "Maxammon" to increase the protein content. A feed mixer provides the TMR, and although this meant a large initial outlay, David believes the advantages it has brought are worthwhile: "We can feed everything every third day and know that every bite will be the same. The performance is uniform."

Bulls achieve liveweight gains of 1.5kg a day, with the top percentage slaughtered at 13 months, averaging 400kg deadweight. Heifers not kept as replacements have another summer at grass and are finished at 18 to 20 months, at 350kg deadweight. Replacement heifers are calved at two-and-a-half years old, as David believes this gives better longevity. Cattle breeding performance is tracked, as is the feed use, which allows the cost per head – in relation to liveweight gain – to be calculated.

A major cost of production in the cattle enterprise is labour and, in the future, David is keen to increase his cattle numbers to the maximum number his stockman can handle. By increasing the kilogrammes produced he will dilute the fixed costs and, therefore, increase profitability.

The sheep enterprise consists of 1100 Highlander ewes and hogs. David changed from Romney ewes to Highlanders six years ago, as he was keen to produce more lambs with fewer inputs. The New Zealand genetics of the Highlanders have proved ideal for an easy-care system, and one man is employed to look after the flock. The Highlander ewes are put to Highlander tups for replacements and Primera tups as the terminal line. "Primeras are a good long sheep which is what you want, as the value is now front and back, not on the legs anymore," he said.

Everything is lambed outside in early April, with the sheep left to do everything as naturally as possible. By the beginning of November only 10 percent of the lambs are still to sell, with everything else sold off grass to Woodhead Brothers at an average of 20kg deadweight. This year, the pure Highlanders produced 409kg lamb/acre at weaning, which is a return comparable to a crop of wheat.

The soft fruit enterprise, Barra Berries, now has eight hectares of raspberries and strawberries in polytunnels, producing 150 tonnes of strawberries and 50 tonnes of raspberries annually. David explained, "Having the berries made me look at other parts of the business in a different way; with the fruit, every input and output is measured."

This attention to detail is now applied to the cattle and sheep enterprises, which gives David a full grasp of how individual enterprises perform. Thorough record keeping gives confidence to make changes. For example, David measures the kilogrammes of lamb which are produced per acre and per field. In this way, fields which are underperforming can be identified and any grassland management issues rectified. +

REDHOUSE OF BARRA: AT A GLANCE

Bulls achieve liveweight gains of 1.5kg/day, averaging 400kg deadweight aged 13 months

263
hectares
farmed

Cattle, sheep,
cereals &
soft fruit

260
Simmental &
Limousin
cross suckler
cows

1100
Highlander
Ewes & Hogs



Planning For Profit: What is it?

The "Planning for Profit" initiative focuses on optimising the profitability and competitiveness of livestock and mixed livestock/arable farms, particularly in the face of reduced support payments following the CAP restructure. The project is supported by the Scottish Government's Skills Development Scheme, QMS and NFU Scotland.

www.qmscotland.co.uk/planning-profit



TWENTY-FIVE YEAR MILESTONE FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

This month sees the start of a range of activities to mark the 25th anniversary of the Quality Assurance schemes which underpin the Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI and Specially Selected Pork brands.



More details of becoming a member and discounted fees are available by calling the QMS Cattle & Sheep scheme office on **0131 335 6602**.

Scotland's quality assurance schemes are among the longest-running in the world with the Scots global pioneers of the quality assurance concept first introduced here in 1990.

These days few would question the value to Scottish livestock producers of having strong brands supported by robust quality assurance schemes and the crucial importance of what quality assurance delivers for the industry was crystal clear when the horsemeat scandal broke in early 2013.

QMS has launched a major recruitment drive to encourage non-members to join the Quality Assurance schemes. The campaign highlights the importance of quality assurance to the future of the industry's brands and to the profitability of livestock farming in Scotland.



Membership is open to farms of all sizes – from large finishing units to much smaller businesses with just a few cattle, sheep or pigs. The fee charged varies with the size of the unit and discounts are available for crofting groups and those who combine assessments with those for other schemes.

Jim McLaren, Chairman of QMS, urged farmers to get behind this campaign. “As an industry, we are very proud of the fact that Scotland was a global pioneer of livestock quality assurance and over the past quarter of a century a great deal has been achieved. However, it is vital that we are not complacent and remain on the front foot.”

“It is important that everyone in our industry plays a part in encouraging any weak links in the chain which are not assured – whether farmers, hauliers, feed companies, auction markets or processors – to understand the importance of whole chain quality assurance to the future of their businesses and our industry,” added Jim.

Importance of quality assurance to consumers

QMS's marketing campaigns, aimed at consumers, have worked hard in recent years to communicate what the Scotch brand stands for with campaigns like “Behind the Label”.

Recent independent market research reveals that shoppers expect the brands, with their quality assurance, to guarantee they can trust the meat they buy. They also expect it to be from a known source, of better eating quality, safer to eat and from animals which have better living conditions. 76 percent of Scots agree that Scotch Beef is a brand they can trust and 89 percent of consumers understand that the Scotch Beef label means the beef is from Scotland. Additionally, 67 percent of Scots understand that the Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb labels mean independent checks are undertaken to make sure the meat has been produced in the right way.✚

QUALITY ASSURANCE: SCOTLAND KEY FACTS

- Around **10,000** farm businesses are quality assured.
- Over **90%** of Scotland's beef breeding herd is covered by quality assurance.
- First scheme established in **1990**.
- **Six schemes** cover – sheep and cattle farms; pig farms; feed; haulage; auction markets and processors.
- The standards are **reviewed regularly** to ensure continuous improvements are made to keep pace with technical and other changes.
- The committees which oversee the standards contain processor, farmer and other **relevant representatives**.

Assessors' vital role



*This year **John Morison** will have been a quality assurance assessor for 20 years. Below he reflects on what it's like to play a key role in Scotland's quality assurance schemes.*

Many assessors are part-time, with many having their own farming business or other jobs as well as assessing.

How do most farmers you visit to do an assessment feel about quality assurance and the need for inspection visits?

Most accept it as part of modern farming and recognise that they need to be in the scheme to get the optimum price for their stock.

They accept that we are practical, fair and that ‘fresh eyes’ can identify a problem that the farmer has overlooked. With new legislation e.g EID with sheep, they appreciate us picking up on a problem before others do. In doing so we can help them avoid a hefty fine.

Has this changed a lot over the years?

Yes. Initially there was much resistance along the lines of ‘who are you telling me how to farm?’

However, supermarkets were also applying their own QA schemes and farmers quickly realised one scheme for Scotland was a good idea. Now the realisation is there is little outlet for non farm assured stock, particularly if a farmer is producing finishing stock.

Any landmarks in your time as an assessor which particularly stick in your mind?

When the Department announced in the 1990s that farmers would receive an additional payment for their ewe subsidy the whole of Shetland joined up! I was asked to go there for about a month to assess all the new applicants – a great experience.

What is your background?

After agricultural college I spent two years working on farms and stations in Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and Canada. I came home and then farmed the family mixed arable/stock unit near Perth until it was sold in the 1990s.

How many assessors are there?

There are 41 assessing for the QMS Cattle & Sheep scheme. Many, including me, assess other schemes such as Red Tractor Dairy, SQC, Auction Markets or Haulage.

Recruitment drive

QMS is undertaking a major recruitment drive to encourage those who are not currently members and could be eligible to come on board. Discounts are available for crofters who wish to be assured as part of a group. Fee discounts are also available where QMS Cattle & Sheep assessments are combined with other schemes e.g. Scottish Quality Crops.

More details of becoming a member and discounted fees are available by calling the QMS Cattle and Sheep scheme office on 0131 335 6602.

Don't be left behind!



THE KEY TO PREGNANT EWE MANAGEMENT

Silage quality and condition scoring are two components of a detailed approach to pregnant ewe management in Graham Lofthouse's flock of 480 ewes at Bankhouse Farm, Stow, in the Scottish Borders.

Less than five percent of lambs are lost between scanning and sale at Bankhouse – a figure which is significantly lower than the UK average of 15 percent and is contributing to increased flock profitability. The Easycare ewes are put to a Suffolk sire, with a proportion bred pure for replacements. Graham, who farms in partnership with his parents, Wilma and Bert, changed from Texel cross ewes six years ago when they introduced a target for ewes in the flock to produce their bodyweight in lambs.

Graham commented: "Our Easycare ewes weigh in the region of 65kg. In 2013, we produced just over this in lamb weight per ewe per year and look set to achieve about the same this year. The Texel crosses could weigh up to 90kg, and it would have been unachievable to expect this performance from them."

The farm extends to 108 ha of upland, which is all grass, and also carries 75 Simmental cross suckler cows. Graham treats the ewes like a dairy herd and manages their nutrition to maximise milk yield from grass.

Monitoring body condition is the cornerstone of this approach, and Graham aims for ewes to be at condition score 3.5 -4 pre tupping and says it is crucial they maintain this level till mid-January. At this point the ewes are normally housed, split by litter size and condition, and fed a controlled diet of silage, providing slightly above their group maintenance requirements – in the region of 11-12 MJ of energy per day.

Graham is an enthusiastic member of the Border Lamb Supply Chain group and, through his participation in this QMS-

supported initiative, is now working closely with John Vipond from SAC Consulting (a division of SRUC, Scotland's Rural College) to further improve the nutrition of the Bankhouse ewes during pregnancy.

Dr Vipond said: "During the last four to six weeks of pregnancy, the pregnant ewe is under severe pressure; ewes need high levels of good quality protein to help the lambs develop and grow a decent covering of wool – with those carrying triplets clearly with even greater demands."

Graham makes a proportion of his silage specifically to feed in late pregnancy. This is first cut from young grass and cut at six weeks, at the optimum leafy stage.

Analysis of the 2014 forage shows ME of 11.5 MJ/kg, 15.2 percent crude protein with a D value of 76.

Dr Vipond added: “Graham provides excellent silage in late pregnancy and also supplies soya bean meal at the rate of 100g per lamb carried per ewe per day.

“What the ewe really needs at this stage is Digestible Undegradable Protein (DUP) which does not break down in the rumen but moves through to the small intestine before it releases the protein for absorption. Soya is the optimum source of DUP, but new sources of protected protein are emerging and this spring, trials will be conducted at Bankhouse on their role in ewe nutrition.”

At housing, condition scoring remains an integral part of the approach, and Graham handles the ewes regularly to assess condition. Individuals are moved to a different group if they lose or gain half a score. For example, a thin ewe carrying twins will be moved in with triplet-bearing ewes; likewise, a fit ewe may be moved in with the singles.

Graham adds: “The ultimate aim is to lamb the ewes at condition score 3, certainly not less than 2.5.”

There is a lot to gain from this planned approach and close attention to detail. Lamb birth weights average 4.2kg for the Suffolk crosses and 3.7kg for the Easycare, with the majority of the flock lambing unassisted. Lambing starts on 1st April, and a vet student is the only support for Graham and his parents. This is sufficient, however, as they encounter very few health issues with the ewes, find the colostrum quality to be first class and the lambs very vigorous to get on their feet and suckle quickly.

“In addition to the feed and labour savings seen in this system, it’s clear to see feeding high-quality silage with correct protein supplementation helps lambs off to the best possible start,” concludes Dr Vipond.+

“Ewes need high levels of good quality protein to help the lambs develop and grow a decent covering of wool.”

Bankhouse Farm, nutrition notes

Gestation	Target Condition Score	Silage/Grass	Additional Feeding
Early-Mid Pregnancy	3.5/4	As grass availability and quality diminishes, poorer quality silage is fed to retain condition.	
Mid Pregnancy	3.5	Ewes move inside and on to higher quality silage.	
Late Pregnancy (4–6 weeks pre lambing)	3/3.5	<p>If silage analysis shows ME of 11 MJ/kg or above, this provides the entire energy requirement of the ewe.</p> <p>If silage is less than ME of 11 MJ/kg, the ration is supplemented to increase the energy.</p>	<p>Protein requirement (in form of DUP) is met with Soya Bean Meal fed at 100g per lamb carried per ewe per day.</p> <p>An alternative energy source such as barley is included, and soya is fed at the same rate as above.</p> <p><i>Trace Elements, minerals and vitamins are included in the total mixed ration.</i></p>
Lambing	2.5/3	Ewes are fed the best quality silage available, as above.	As above.

BANKHOUSE FARM: AT A GLANCE

108

hectares owned

Graham Lofthouse

in partnership with his parents

480

Easycare ewes, put to the Suffolk tup with some bred pure for replacements

75

Simmental cross suckler herd

All lambs finished on farm,

60%

finished off grass

Sold to Scotbeef, average weight between **19.6kg** and **20.1kg**, mainly R3 grades

Scan at between **175%** and **189%** but lambs lost between scanning and sale are less than **5%**

Silage is ensiled in a pit and a TMR feeder delivers the ration



Paddock Grazing Perseverance Pays Off

A year ago the potential of paddock-grazing cattle held little appeal for Dumfries monitor farmers the **Paterson family** of Hartbush, just north of Dumfries.

However, in early 2014 encouragement from the monitor farm community group and its Smiths Gore facilitators persuaded them to consider a paddock grazing venture. Now, the family are enthusiastically planning their paddock grazing for 2015.

"There were some sharp learning curves and even an early 'will we, won't we stick with it' discussion," recalled John Paterson.

Nevertheless, by autumn 2014 cattle housing, the clearly better performance of paddock-grazed heifers compared to conventionally set-stocked heifers, left monitor farmers John and Amanda Paterson and their two teenage children - Louise and Steven - in no doubt about the rewards of regularly moving cattle onto fresh grazing.

The 606 acre (245 ha) Hartbush, farmed by the Patersons with the assistance of valued team member Colin Rae, is the only farm in the QMS Scotland-wide monitor farm network which primarily focuses on cattle finishing.

Service sires for the 260 mainly continental cross suckler cows are Limousin, Charolais and Simmental.

Bull calves, kept entire, are finished in a bull beef system. Other than retained replacements, heifers are targeted at finishing, with the Patersons keeping a keen eye on the forward store heifer trade.

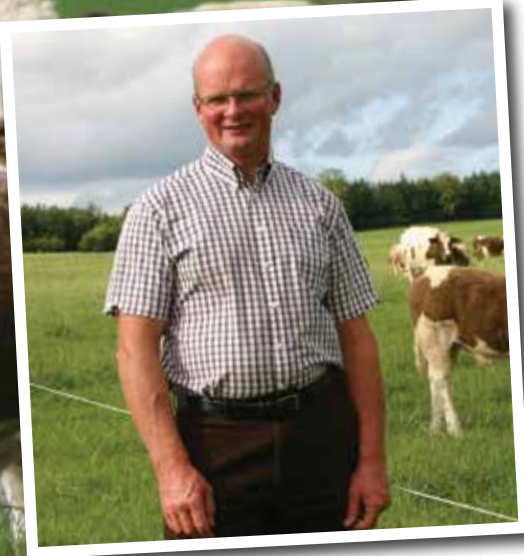
Some farmer-to-farmer learning in early 2014 had given the Patersons the final incentive to try paddock grazing. They visited Doug and Lorna Greenshields of

South Mains at Sanquhar (Dumfriesshire), who were QMS Grassland Development Farmers from 2009-2011, with the rotational grazing of their home-bred store cattle a focal discussion topic.

"We were really surprised by how well their system worked, especially as the land where growing cattle were gaining a kilo a day used to be rough ground where Doug's father had wintered the cows," explained John.

In spring 2014, a 20.78 acre (8.41 ha) Hartbush field of young grass was electric fenced into the first three of eight planned paddocks, each 2.86 acres (1.16 ha), with water accessible from each paddock.

On 1st May a group of 55 heifers, aged just over a year and averaging 365 kgs, was turned into the first paddock (the stocking rate for a whole field was 2,385 kgs/ha).



John Paterson, Dumfries Monitor farm host.

A day later 34 breeding heifers, on average 11 days older and 38 kgs heavier, were set stocked on a 20 acre (8.09 ha) field of permanent pasture (the stocking rate was 1,692 kgs/ha). By 9th May, the paddock grazing heifers were in the third paddock.

"Grass growth in May was wonderful," commented John. "In fact it was too good, and by 9th May there was far too much grass ahead of the cattle.

"Then it rained, really rained! The cattle churned up the paddock they were in, as they ran up and down the wire trying to get to the fresh grass. So on 11th May we let the cattle through into the rest of the field, which hadn't been grazed, where they stayed for over a week.

"At this stage we were almost giving in, but after much discussion we decided we had to give the project our best shot. One of the many people we spoke with was Rhidian Jones of SAC Consulting (a division of SRUC), who gave us a huge amount of encouragement. We greatly appreciated his support and experience-based advice."

The Paterson family's perseverance paid off. The paddock grazing venture became a drive-by spectator sport for the monitor farm community group, as the field is easily visible from the road, thus enabling local farmers to check on progress whenever they liked.

The paddock-grazed 8.41ha received slightly more fertiliser (an increased cost of £8.68 per ha) than the 8.09 ha set stocked field.

At one stage, there was too much grass on the paddock-grazed field for the 55 heifers, enabling the Patersons to make 29 big bales of silage from the excess.

Both groups of cattle were regularly weighed during the summer. After 114 days at grass, the 89 cattle were weighed for the last time before housing the finishing heifers.

This provided the final, eagerly anticipated figures, comparing the performance of the two groups of cattle and the weight gain/hectare for each set up.

The tables below give the performance, income and costs for the two grazing systems this season, which show that the paddock grazing system increased the margin generated per hectare by almost 150 percent.

Grazing systems

Income	Set Stocking	Paddock Grazing
Av liveweight (kg) at turnout	403	365
Stocking rate (No/Ha) (kg/Ha)	4.2 1692	6.54 2385
Av weight after 114 days	483	468
Av daily liveweight gain (LWG) (Kg/hd) Kg/Ha)	0.70 2.95	0.91 5.94
Value of LWG @ £2.15/kg) (£/Ha)	722.40	1457.70
Value of silage	nil	41.38
Income for season (£/Ha)	722.40	1499.08

Costs	Set Stocking	Paddock Grazing
Fertiliser (£/Ha)	223.58	232.26
Water & E Fence Systems (depreciated over 5 yrs) (£/Ha)	nil	34.94
Cost for season (£/Ha)	223.58	267.20
Margin for season (£/Ha)	498.82	1231.88

John concluded: "We're novices at paddock grazing and through the summer we discovered there are many lessons to be learnt, not least flexibility and being ready to respond quickly to any challenges as they crop up.

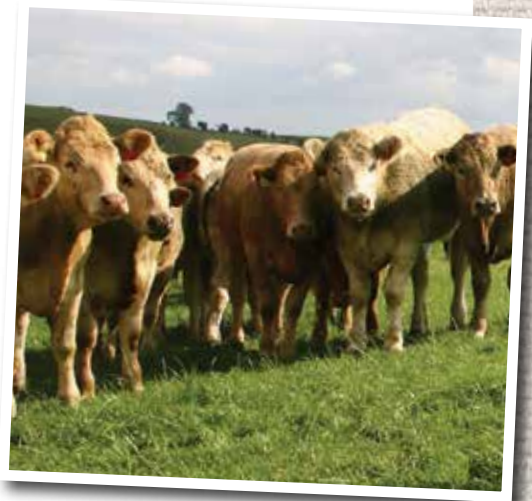
"Yet despite our inexperience and almost abandoning the project within the first two weeks, the figures clearly show the benefits.

"Once we'd developed some confidence and early cattle weighings showed encouraging results, we began to really enjoy the paddock grazing.

"Moving the electric fence became something we looked forward to, and we often took a few minutes just to listen to the cattle, all with their heads down, enthusiastically grazing the new grass they'd just been turned onto - a great sound!"

The next Dumfries monitor farm meeting will be on 5th February, when QMS Chairman Jim McLaren will speak about the Beef 2020 Report.✚

"Once we'd developed some confidence and early cattle weighings showed encouraging results, we began to really enjoy the paddock grazing".



✚ For general information on monitor farms, plus detailed reports of meetings, visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/monitor-farms

ANTIBIOTIC REDUCTION SUCCESS

A great deal of hard work goes in to maximising the health of the pigs in Scottish herds, involving a concerted effort by farmers, vets and processors.

Quality Meat Scotland works with pig farmers on a range of initiatives aimed at further improving animal health, including a focus on the use of antibiotics.



**"Healthy pigs
pay better"**

says **Robin Traquair**, who has 350 sows on a top performing breeding unit in Midlothian. Our attitude to antibiotics is that we have always been reluctant to overuse, however now having a high health herd we currently spend less than 80p per finished pig for all vet and medication costs.

Aside from the obvious welfare benefits, good animal health delivers substantial production benefits, so overall health is a constant target for farmers, points out Jamie Robertson of Livestock Management Systems. Jamie, who is joint-facilitator of the QMS Pig Monitor Farm in Aberdeenshire, said: "In the UK, the attitude towards antibiotic use has generally been 'as little as possible but as much as necessary'."

"Antibiotics fit in to good pig health management as a valuable means of attaining a rapid recovery by individual sick pigs, and a substantial reduction in disease pressure among all the other animals in the same group."

The health of all QMS quality assured pig units is routinely checked when the pigs reach the processor via the Wholesome Pigs Scotland scheme, with the results reported direct back to the farmers. Amalgamated health data is analysed and used to direct discussions and decision-making between individual farmers and their vet.

The QMS pig monitor farm group was given a first-hand account earlier this year from a Dutch pig farmer and his vet about their experience of driving down antibiotic use on farm. "The Netherlands are leading the way in reducing the use of antibiotics by farmers and vets," explained Jamie.

"An awareness campaign highlighting the prudent use of antibiotics was launched in 2008 and included workshops for livestock producers to explain the mechanisms of antibiotic resistance and instructions on correct antibiotic use.

"The campaign was extremely successful, and within four years the Netherlands saw a 50% decrease in the use of antibiotics across all the animal species."

The Scottish pig sector has similar gains to make, he said, with reductions in antibiotic usage not only a requirement but an opportunity to improve market image and challenge accepted behaviours.



"The Netherlands are leading the way in reducing the use of antibiotics by farmers and vets..."

However, some initial concern has been raised in the UK about the potential for such a campaign to potentially reduce pig health, with any cost saving being replaced by new costs and poorer performance.

"One of the key ingredients in the Netherlands programme has been that farmers are encouraged to make a change in the application of hygiene standards and biosecurity within their units.

"Farmers introduced strict protocols on areas such as minimised mixing of pigs, colostrum intake, cleaning and disinfection.

"In return, the farmers benefited from increased pig numbers through the system, reduced antibiotic use, and improved health in the grower/finisher stages."

One Dutch unit that adopted these changes saw their total veterinary cost drop from 76.33 to 42.94 per sow per year and 7.65 to 4.01 per finishing pig over four years – a 56 percent and 52 percent reduction respectively. Health indices improved significantly, and annual average animal daily dose for sows dropped to 3.08 compared with a Dutch average of 26, and 0.15aaDD for finishing pigs compared with the Dutch average of 16.

Antibiotics should be considered as a tool in tackling bacterial infections, said Jamie, but they are only part of the solution, along with good husbandry and suitable buildings.

"The Scottish and UK sectors have responsible guidelines for antibiotic use that are being re-promoted, and QMS is working with the feed industry, veterinary sector as well as the Pig Health and Welfare Council towards a reporting system of antibiotic use that fits with the aspirations of the EU sector to report and manage the use of antibiotics in the food chain," said Allan Ward, QMS Pig Specialist.

"The Scottish target for pig health standards has long been a good one, and although the dividing line between health and disease is constantly shifting, the smart use of antibiotics is an integral part of the package of high health, high welfare, quality food production," added Allan.



Allan Ward, Pig Specialist at QMS.

Performance of finishing pigs in the Netherlands

After new routines on hygiene and mixing practices

Vet costs per sow reduced by **56%**

Dutch average aaDD = **16**
Figure achieved **0.15**

Annual average animal daily dose for sows = **26**
Figure achieved **3.08**





A LOOK AT MARKET TRENDS

Farmers and processors work hard to produce high quality livestock and meat, but ultimately their income is determined by consumer behaviour.

By **Stuart Ashworth**, QMS Head of Economics Services

Consumers often sing from a different hymn sheet to producers. The most obvious difference is that farmers produce animals while consumers buy cuts of meat. Converting a carcass into retail cuts of meat, or indeed ready meals with a meat content, is the domain of processors and butchers.

This challenge is what results in the topic of carcass balance. In a nutshell, this means balancing the demands of the marketplace with the balance of the carcass. At some times of year, roasting joints may be in demand while stewing steak or mince may be less popular. Some regions or countries may prefer a different product from another; factor in the various seasonal celebrations and planning delivery of meat becomes more complex.

It is for this reason that export markets, cold stores, food manufacturing and butchery skills are key to managing carcass balance – as is having a carcass of the right specification to start with.

Adding to the processor and wholesaler requirements are the further demands of their clients, ranging from breed and age criteria to provenance and assurances over production processes or feeding regimes. Ultimately, these issues feed back to demands on farmers.

We're making improvements across our supply chain to make sure that livestock is treated properly at every step of the process."

So as we enter 2015, what look set to be the new trends on the block? Product assurance is expected to remain of key importance, and QMS is working to improve the ability of the supply chain to demonstrate assurance and traceability. Also likely to gain ground will be calls for sustainable production systems.

Many international food businesses and retailers are grappling with this topic. Several have made public statements. McDonald's restaurants, for example, in their 2012-2013 corporate responsibility and sustainability report, state that they will "develop goals and begin purchase of verified sustainable beef by 2016".

Similarly ALDI, although a little less committal, state: "We are committed to our agricultural raw materials and livestock products being produced to high industry standards and in an ever more sustainable way."



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Animal welfare also continues to be of interest and, for some, is included in a wider definition of sustainability which includes ethical practices. Consumer research carried out for the European Commission concluded that 45% of the UK population considered that farmers should “ensure the welfare of farmed animals”.

Only Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands showed higher levels of interest in animal welfare. Major retailers, recognising this, have expressed views on animal welfare; for example, the ASDA website states “At ASDA we care about animal welfare... We’re making improvements across our supply chain to make sure that livestock is treated properly at every step of the process.”

Meanwhile, ALDI state: “For beef, pork, poultry and other meats, we insist on good animal welfare standards.”

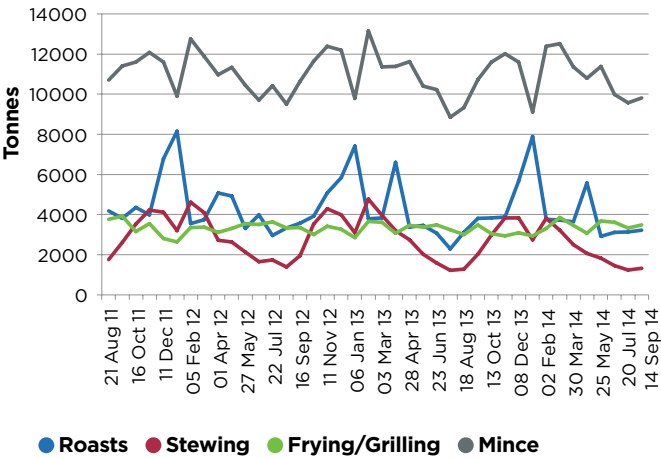
While clearly every livestock farmer would concur, there may be growing pressure in the future to demonstrate this. Having a fully functioning written animal health plan may, in years to come, be part of the evidence that demonstrates for retailers “good animal welfare standards”.

The advantage for farmers of many of these additional demands is that they can often be met by actions which improve farm margins. High standards of animal welfare enhance animal efficiency; the challenge for 2015 is to improve the availability and use of data on animal disease – both clinical and sub clinical.

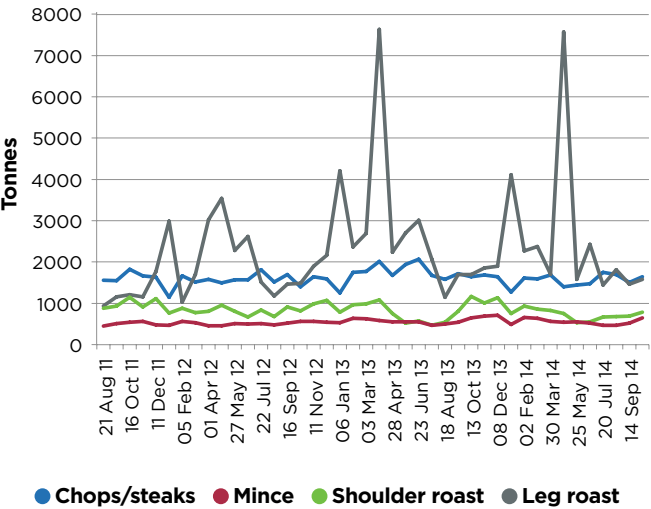
Improving sustainability credentials relates to “sweating the assets” by producing more, or the same, with less through more efficient use of resources, thereby benefiting both economic sustainability and environmental sustainability. Most farmers recognise this challenge everyday as they seek to make better use of animal genetics, feed, fertilisers and manures so as to minimise livestock mortality and maximise growth. In this respect, the livestock sector need not shy away from the sustainability debate but rather welcome the opportunities it creates to gain recognition and add value.+

✚ To find out more information about market trends visit www.qmscotland.co.uk

Monthly GB retail purchases of beef



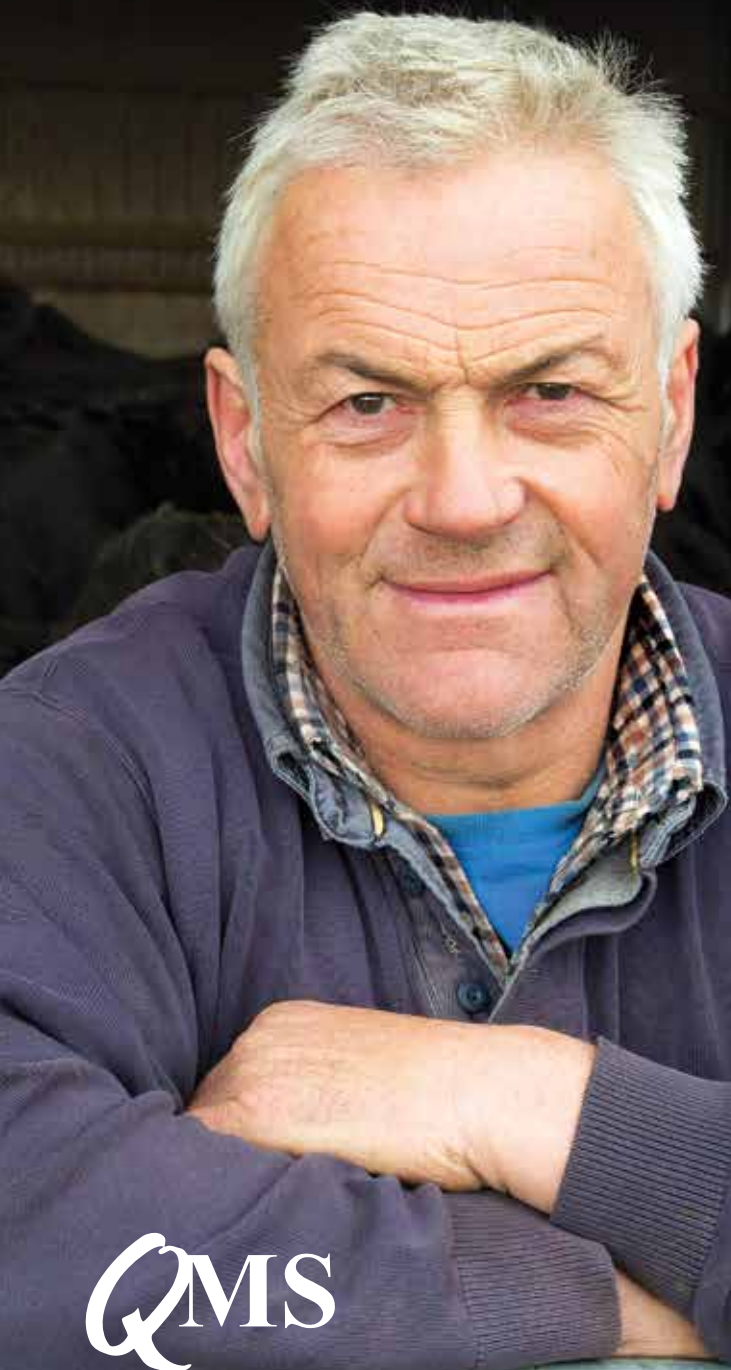
Monthly GB retail purchases of lamb





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David Houstoun, Glenkilrie Farm, Glenshee



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