

News Release
29 March 2021

*Embargoed until 12noon.*

**New QMS report reveals the potential of harnessing DNA to improve Scotch Beef PGI**

Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) has launched today (29 March) the findings from their Scotch Beef PGI Traceability and Performance project, which examined the potential of DNA testing for traceability and improving the performance of the Scottish beef herd.

Established to research how QMS could further support the national beef herd to meet its potential, the proof-of-concept project, which was funded by the Scottish Government’s Knowledge Transfer Innovation Fund, had two main objectives: to explore the use of genomic analysis of maternal DNA to guarantee traceability and to predict the performance of offspring.

Working alongside key partners within Scotland’s beef industry, and under the guidance of Dr Jonathan Birnie, project manager, participating farmers collected high quality samples from their herds to enable both accurate traceability and driving a herd development programme. The samples were then tested by Identigen, and analysed by the Moredun Research Institute. The results were analysed alongside animal performance data to give a performance overview of each of the beef herds in question.

Bruce McConachie, Head of Industry Development for QMS, said that the findings of the study have confirmed that the introduction of a beef DNA traceability system could greatly improve the productivity and profitability of Scotland’s beef herd.

“The study demonstrated that it is feasible to harness the potential of DNA data to develop a programme that is not only effective but can provide a significant cost benefit to the national herd and with no additional burden to be placed on individual farming businesses.

“Specifically, results revealed that utilising DNA would give us a world leading traceability standard and eliminate fraud from the sector and improve the saleability of the product through improved consumer confidence.

“The study also proved that we can utilise data from sources like BCMS and abattoirs to improve efficiency on farm, by reducing finishing time, improving calving intervals and reducing calf mortality, as well as an improvement in feed conversion and the number of calves per cow.”

Alan Clarke, QMS Chief Executive, added:

“As an organisation, we continue to look at opportunities to add value for our levy payers with research projects, like this, providing farming businesses with the necessary knowledge to improve their productivity and profitability.

“Harnessing DNA information for the benefit of the Scottish beef herd is vital to demonstrate that Scottish producers are amongst the best in the world and the introduction of a DNA information programme could underpin the integrity of the Scotch Beef PGI brand through product traceability.

“Looking to the future, QMS will be engaging with the Scottish red meat supply chain to share our findings and identify if there is the potential to roll out a national programme across Scotland.”

The summary document, with the results of the Scotch Beef PGI Traceability and Performance project, will be available via the QMS website and provides a foundation for developing the tools needed to help Scottish producers drive the industry forward.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors:**

This press release was issued by Jane Craigie Marketing on behalf of Quality Meat Scotland. For additional press information, please contact Alana on 07596 122184 or alana@janecraigie.com.

To download a word version of this press release, please click here.

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and abroad and also promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI brands is correct and should not be substituted for an alternative such as Scots or Scottish. The history of the use of the word Scotch in this way, traces back to the 18th century.

QMS also helps the Scottish red meat sector improve its sustainability, efficiency and profitability and maximise its contribution to Scotland's economy.

The quality assurance schemes run by QMS cover more than 90% of livestock farmed for red meat in Scotland. They offer consumers in the UK and overseas the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that have spent their whole lives being raised to some of the world’s strictest welfare standards.

Scotland’s beef, lamb and pork producers make an important contribution to the country’s economic, social and environmental sustainability, contributing over £2 billion to the annual GDP of Scotland and supporting around 50,000 jobs (many in fragile rural areas) in the farming, agricultural supply and processing sectors.

For more information visit www.qmscotland.co.uk or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.