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*For immediate use*

**Nominations now open for two prestigious farming awards**

Champions of Scotland’s beef and sheep industry are urged to submit nominations for the prestigious 2021 AgriScot Scotch Beef and Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year awards.

Resuming after a hiatus due to the coronavirus pandemic, the awards, sponsored by Thorntons Solicitors and supported by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), set out to reward Scottish farms which exemplify the best in beef and sheep production.

Recognising the achievements, innovation and forward thinking of beef and sheep producers, the awards help raise the profile of farmers who work hard to produce top-quality Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI.

Alistair and Suzi along with Margaret and Russel Kingan of Kingan Farms, near Dumfries were awarded AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year award in 2019, the last time the competition was held. A family partnership, Kingan Farms is a beef finishing system with a turnover of approximately 1,400 cattle per year on 475-hectares of owned and tenanted land across four locations.

“Winning the AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year award was just fantastic. For ourselves and the team, it was really important to be acknowledged for all the hard work that we do,” said Suzi Kingan.

Alistair Kingan added: “There are other farmers out there that are doing equally as good a job as us and they should stand proud and put themselves forward for these awards. A lot of people don’t really understand what our day-to-day jobs are and the passion that’s in our industry.

Their delight was mirrored by Kevin Stewart from Sharpitlaw Farm in Kelso who was announced as AgriScot Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year in 2019.

Operating on 500-hectares across three predominantly upland units from a base at Sharpitlaw, the farms carry 1,250 ewes, 315 gimmers, 950 ewe lambs, 1,080 feeding lambs.

“We applied for the award because we knew we did things a bit differently, but we also knew we were pretty good at it.

“Winning it was wonderful recognition for a lot of years of hard work, not just by me but by the people that work with me as well,” said Kevin.

The recipients of both of the 2021 awards will each receive a £500 cheque plus a £250 voucher to celebrate their success at a restaurant in the Scotch Beef Club – the club run by QMS with members committed to serving top quality Scotch produce. The awards will be presented at AgriScot at Ingliston on Wednesday 17 November.

The awards also recognise innovation in the red meat and livestock industry, which QMS Chair Kate Rowell says is central to an exciting, world-class future.

"Red meat producers are driving some leading agri-innovation, on-farm and through the supply chain and the AgirScot awards are an opportunity to recognise some of the best of our industry and showcase the fantastic and progressive stock management skills the industry is renowned for," Ms Rowell said.

Robert Neill, AgriScot Chairman encouraged beef and sheep farmers across Scotland to nominate someone they know or apply themselves for either award. He said: “No matter the size or location of your farm, breed of livestock, or grazing system, we strongly encourage entries from producers across the country.”

Kenneth Mackay, partner and head of the Land and Rural Business team at Thorntons added: “After what has been a challenging year for us all, we look forward to once again sponsoring the awards that celebrate and showcase the best of Scotland’s beef and lamb producers.”

Farmers can either apply themselves, or nominate, in confidence, other beef or sheep producers they feel are deserving of the title ‘AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year’ or ‘AgriScot Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year’.

To nominate a farm for either award, email the details to lstrang@qmscotland.co.uk.

**Ends**

**Notes to editors:**

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.