

News Release
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**You can’t have a functioning ecosystem without animals: US soil specialist is next international guest on QMS podcast**

American soil specialist and founder of the Soil Health Academy in Missouri, Ray Archuleta, is the next guest on QMS’ international podcast series, airing on Tuesday 22 June.

In conversation with QMS podcast presenter Mark Stephen, “the soil guy”, as he’s dubbed, discusses the fundamentals of using biomimicry and agroecology to improve soil function and reduce input costs. He examines the essential role of livestock and cover cropping, in particular, to farm effectively in tandem with extreme weather events.

“In the States, the Government has perpetuated the wrong premise – “we must control nature to get the maximum yields”, “nature is against us”,” says Mr Archueta. “It takes a lot of energy and cost to fight nature. We need to switch the premise and work with it, reduce inputs and save on costs. [Australia is doing really well with its soil health, but it’s not tied into government support].”

Mr Archuleta worked for the US Government’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for 30 years but retired to establish the Soil Health Academy in 2017 to teach the strategies and principles of biomimicry – using solutions found by nature over millions of years to guide man-made actions - and agroecology.

“Over three decades and billions of dollars spent, I could see the Government wasn’t fixing the problem of sustainable agriculture. There is still erosion, and while 300 acres should be able to support two or three families, it isn’t. This is because of the cost of inputs and the way we are farming.”

Advocating the importance of keeping bare soil covered with cropping to promote soil structure and ecology, Mr Archuleta says he is also frustrated that a lot of environmental groups see livestock as a problem:

“Soil is the most elegant and complex ecosystem in the world. Without plant life, it is just geology. You also can’t have a functioning ecosystem without animals. When livestock take a bite of grass, it stimulates it, and the plant leaks more carbon compounds to feed more biology. In some respects, the critics can be right as there is overgrazing, but this is not the fault of the cow or the sheep - we need to look at the human being. Land is a reflection of the understanding of the people managing it.”

Ray owns and operates his own 150-acre farm near Seymour, Missouri with his wife and family. He has 300 sheep and manages the land and soil enhancement through split grazing, the natural solution to overgrazing, he says, as bison have done over millennia as they migrate to new pastures:

“Overgrazing is not a function of livestock numbers, it’s a function of time: moving animals on and allowing for the grass to recover before repeating the cycle. It’s good for the soil and it’s good for the animals.”

Beth Alexander, QMS Beef and Sheep Specialist said: “Soil health and regenerative agriculture are dominating the media and social feeds at the moment, and Ray brings some thought-provoking insights from his experience across the world, the different scale and practices of America; why it matters and how integrating small changes can make a difference.”

To listen to the full podcast, head to Apple Podcast, Buzzsprout and Spotifiy, or head to the QMS website or social media channels.

**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.

**More about Ray Archuleta:**

Ray is a Certified Professional Soil Scientist with the Soil Science Society of America and has over 30 years’ experience as a Soil Conservationist, Water Quality Specialist, and Conservation Agronomist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). During his tenure with the NRCS Ray served in New Mexico, Missouri, Oregon, and North Carolina.

Ray received his AS degree in Livestock Science from Northern New Mexico College and a BS degree in Agricultural Biology plus 30 hours of graduate work in soil related courses from New Mexico State University. He served in the Peace Corps for two years in Guatemala as a Livestock Specialist.

After his retirement from the NRCS in 2017, Ray founded Understanding Ag, LLC, and Soil Health Academy, LLC, to teach Biomimicry strategies and Agroecology principles for improving soil function on a national scale.

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.

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