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*For immediate use*

**Finalists for the AgriScot Scotch Beef and Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year announced**

The finalists for the AgriScot Scotch Beef and Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year were announced today, 18 January, with all sharing a common enthusiasm to improve productivity and efficiency.

The awards, sponsored by Thorntons Solicitors and supported by Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), set out to reward Scottish farms which exemplify high standards in beef and sheep production.

QMS Chair, Kate Rowell, said that the finalists all demonstrated a passion to produce high quality, sustainable Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI.

“I’m always impressed by the calibre of applicants for both AgriScot awards and it was not easy task to determine which farms goes through to the next stage of judgding. I’m delighted to announce the finalists for the Scotch Beef Farm of the Year award are Durie Farms in Fife, run by Douglas Christie; Adziel in Aberdeenshire, run by James, Irene and Gillian Fowlie; and, Drumbreddan Farm run by Daniel and Lamont Hair.

“The Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year award finalists are Swinside Townfoot, run by Peter Hedley in Jedburgh; Saughland Farm, run by Farm Manager, Peter Eccles, and flock manager Owen Gray in Pathhead; and, Attonburn Farm, run by Robert and Becca Rennie in Yetholm.”

The aim of the AgriScot Scotch Beef and Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year awards is to raise the profile of the dedication and stock management skills behind the production of Scotch Beef PGI and Scotch Lamb PGI.

The assessors for the sheep award this year are Kate Rowell (QMS), Hamish Dykes (AgriScot) and Kevin Stewart (2019 Scottish Sheef Farmer of the Year recipient). With the beef award being judged by Bruce McConachie(QMS), Robert Neill (Chair of AgriScot) and Alistair Kingan (2019 Scottish Beef Farm of the Year recipient).

Over the last month, the assessors visited the finalists’ farms to learn more about each business and decide which will take home the titles at the awards ceremony on 9 February 2022 which will be streamed live on the AgriScot website”.

AgriScot Chairman, Robert Neill, said: “It is important that AgriScot showcases and rewards quality beef and sheep production in Scotland, and celebrate the people behind it, and we are delighted to recognise these finalists.”

As well as evidence of a high standard of technical and financial performance, those assessing the farms looked for evidence of the uptake of new ideas to improve efficiency and profitability and whether the businesses had an eye on the market for the end product.

Kenneth Mackay, a partner in the Land and Rural Business team Thorntons Solicitors said: “We are proud to be sponsors of both the Scottish Sheep Farm of the Year and Scotch Beef Farm of the Year awards. AgriScot is keen to recognise all elements of the agricultural sector and we are delighted to be able to help them achieve that goal.”

As well as receiving the coveted title, the recipients will receive a £500 cheque as well as a £250 voucher to celebrate their success at a Scotch Beef Club restaurant. The club, run by QMS, has around 150 members committed to serving top quality Scotch Beef PGI.

For more information about the awards, or to look back on past recipients, head to the QMS website www.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.