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*For immediate use*

**It’s never a ‘one size fits all’ approach for north east finisher**

North-east beef and sheep producer Gavin Ross farms at Wardhead, Strichen in Aberdeenshire with his family and strong team of farm hands, lorry drivers and office workers. The business, Ross Bros, has a long-standing reputation for keeping the end market firmly in mind when it comes to the management of both the beef and sheep enterprises.

Having recently won the ‘best steak’ at Asda’s Royal Highland Show steak competition and both champion and reserve in the New Deer Show carcase competition, Ross Bros is no stranger to prize-winning stock.

Although the temptation of the show ring always prevailed for Gavin and his family, the perpetual challenge of time constraints meant that the hours needed to get animals ‘ring-ready’ just were not available. That’s why, carrying on with ‘business as usual’ and presenting a quality end product seemed like the best course of action.

“We are in a unique position here in this country. We’ve natural grass aplenty, a favourable farming environment, celebrated assurance standards and hormone-free meat. The Scotch brand symbolises all of this and is something we should all be proud of.

“For me, producing meat that tastes good is the most important thing, but it’s rarely the genetics that influence this quality, it’s the way the animal is reared that makes the biggest difference. Of course, there are some people who don’t consider where their beef comes from, but equally, there is a huge market of consumers who do care, and they would like their meat to come from Scotland knowing that it has been bred, reared, and also finished here, all the way through its life.”

Gavin is not selective of one single breed, he buys a wide range of animals and types, selling them every week to abattoirs across Scotland, once they have reached their weight and market ‘spec’. The animals’ nutrition is a top priority, and he believes that a correctly balanced diet, tailored to age, weight and gender, ensures business efficiency, that the needs of processors are met, and the meat on the table is consistently delicious.

In terms of the Ross Bros blueprint, cattle are grazed over the spring and summer months, and for those not at the weight specification when brought in for wintering, home-mixed rations of forage, cereals and cost-effective by products are sourced.

Gavin works closely with Harbro nutritionists and Beef and Sheep Director, David Mackenzie, to ensure the correct diets are fed so that animals hit ever-tightening target market specifications.

David highlights: "Both steer and heifer diets are formulated with homegrown forage, and blended cereals and dark grains in order to achieve the correct fat cover and meat yield.

“It is important we tailor a balanced diet for the stock to fulfil consistent frame growth and to prevent growth setbacks resulting from feeding maintenance only diets. Stunted periods of growth also result in gristle throughout the meat, reducing eating quality and increasing unproductive days on farm, so undesirable for both consumer and farmer.”

Gavin continues: “With each processor having different requirements in terms of weight and conformation, our team is going through batches of cattle daily to guarantee we are selecting animals in spec. With a variety of breeds and both steers and heifers being finished, it can present us with many challenges, so it’s important that we collaborate with David and his team to get the best possible results.

“We also work incredibly closely with Donview Veterinary Centre, Inverurie. Health planning is an integral part of maintaining and improving the health of our animals, and essential to the maximisation of our productivity and efficiency.

“Everything we have achieved to date would not be possible without the entire Ross Bros team, who are truly an extension of our family. From our skilled stockmen and transport operators, to the vets who visit weekly, the right team is crucial to the running of our business.”

Also on the QMS Scotch Assured holdings, Gavin runs a substantial breeding flock of sheep, finishing a large number of lambs annually. Animal welfare and wellbeing is also of paramount importance in safeguarding maximum product quality, feeding into a whole chain system that upholds the highest standards and ultimately results in award winning Scotch red meat.

**/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 Rose on 07493 876646 or rose@janecraigie.com.

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.