

**Press release**

\*embargoed until 12:30pm\*

16 November 2022

**AgriScot Farm Business of the Year winners stem from all corners of Scotland**

Announced today by Cabinet Secretary, Mairi Gougeon, during a ceremony at one of the UK’s premier agricultural business events, the winners of the prestigious AgriScot Farm Business of the Year awards have been revealed.

Spanning five categories, the aim of the awards is to celebrate the innovation, skill and dedication within Scottish farming, and to recognise and reward those enterprises successfully tackling emissions, boosting biodiversity, bolstering productivity and maximising profitability.

Taking home the title of Scottish Arable Farm of the Year, sponsored by SoilEssentials and supported by AHDB, was Colin McGregor of **McGregor Farms**, Berwickshire.

Colin Laird of **Blyth Farm** in the Borders was awarded Scottish Dairy Farm of the Year, sponsored by CowAlert.

Harry Brown of **Auchmaliddie Mains Farm**, Peterhead, was presented with Scotch Beef Farm of the Year, with Calum McDiarmid of **Mains of Murthly**, Aberfeldy, crowned Sheep Farm of the Year - both sponsored by Thorntons Solicitors and supported by QMS.

Concluding the ceremony, Diversified Farm of the Year, sponsored by SAC Consulting, was awarded to Claire Pollock of **Ardross Farm**, Fife.

Commenting on the announcements, Chair of AgriScot, Robert Neill, said:

“The Farm Business of the Year awards are always a highlight of the day. It is fantastic to see thriving farming businesses, from Aberdeenshire to the Borders, recognised for the high standards they uphold and example they set for the wider industry.

“It has been a challenging time for agriculture, with many issues ongoing, but these awards remind us that there is much to celebrate within the sector. Once again, I would like to congratulate all our winners and wish them all the very best in the future.”

Initial entry to the awards was through the completion of an application form, outlining farm business details, processes and outcomes. After being whittled down, shortlisted farms were then visited by a selection of judges, before the final three from each category were named during a live streamed event in early October.

Also taking place on the day was the live final of the Business Skills Award, with Jack Young crowned the winner and successfully taking home the £1000 cash prize, kindly supported by SRUC and NFU Mutual. The final stage of the competition involved evaluating the recipient of the Product Innovation Award and presenting their findings back to a panel of judges, answering further questions around business skills, topical agricultural issues and how they are developing their CV.

-ENDS-

For more information, to arrange an interview or press enquiries, please contact Claire Taylor via claire@janecraigie.com or 07726 219687.

**Notes to editors:**

For more information on each of the award winners, see below.

**AgriScot Arable Farm of the Year - Colin McGregor, McGregor Farms**

Colin took on the daily running of the family business in 1989 at the age of 21 when the farmed area was 300 hectares and specialised in pre-packed potato production. Over the past 23 years his business has been approached to contract farm nearby neighbouring land and there are now 15 agreements covering a managed area of 3,445 hectares.

 The arable operation predominantly grows winter wheat and oilseed rape, but winter barley, spring barley, spring oats, spring beans, potatoes and vining peas are also grown. Every farm has an individual rotation to suit its soil type, infrastructure and location, with Colin and his team focusing on building fertility and soil health to maximise yield and reduce risk.

The business is a LEAF Farm and all farms they are involved with are participants of environmental schemes. Precision Farming Technology is used extensively and there is regular soil sampling including organic matter testing and organic manures are utilised where possible.

**AgriScot Dairy Farm of the Year - Colin Laird, Blyth Farms**

Peeblesshire-based Colin of Blyth Farms runs Blythbridge Holsteins in partnership with his family, milking 540 cows daily, using 10 Lely A5 robots. The business has been built up over the past three generations and more recently saw the completion of a new dairy complex, constructed with the aim of maximising the potential of the Holstein breed.

The herd participates in weekly vet inspections to monitor fertility, and regular foot trimming, along with foot washers on the robots, has eliminated the need for antibiotics to treat lameness. This May, Blyth Farm opened its gates to the public and welcomed over 750 farming and non-farming visitors to explore the new dairy facility and to see other aspects of the farm. The family are also supporters of RHET, hosting school visits on the farm and regularly welcome international groups.

**AgriScot Scotch Beef Farm of the Year - Harry Brown – Auchmaliddie Mains**

Harry Brown of Auchmaliddie Mains, Aberdeenshire, runs a herd of 200 predominantly Limousin-cross sucker cows and buys in 200 store cattle per annum to finish, fattening all animals on the 750-acre farm. Of the 400 cattle finished per year, around 30 are sold direct to the customer via farmers’ markets or doorstep deliveries, as Harry and his family work to foster local relationships.

Their beef system transformed with the introduction of the Ritchie Weigh Monitor, with cattle being weighed daily. Underperformers are quickly identified and removed from the herd, saving money on feed, and allowing only the highest quality animal to enter the food chain. Traceability is key, with digital software accelerating the monitoring process and translating as increased efficiencies. And, collaborating with their farm nutritionist and vet on a regular basis, Harry ensures that his animals are always in peak condition.

With a focus on sustainability, the family have constructed a new outdoor silage pit to cut down on plastic use and increase indoor capacity for bedding pens. Carbon audits, soil analytics and GPS technology have also been key to assessing the wider impact of the farm enterprise.

**AgriScot Sheep Farm of the Year - Mains of Murthly – Calum McDiarmid**

The philosophy of Calum McDiarmid’s sheep enterprise at Mains of Murthly, Aberfeldy, which extends to over 244ha of Perthshire landscape, is about minimising input and maximising output by creating a more efficient system. Shepherd Ed Munt runs 1350 breeding ewes, 400 home bred ewe lambs and 25 tups, 12 of which are Innovis Aberfield and 13 terminals of either NZ Suffolk or Aberblacks.

The whole system has changed over the past five years to become a predominantly grass based setup centred around rotational grazing, with divisional solar electric fence systems and Opico sward lifter improving the quality and volume of grass.

All ewes are condition scored every six weeks to both correct any problems, and to ensure all stock are improving and performing. When it comes to health, prevention is better than cure.

All lambs have traditionally been sold prime to the abattoir with the average weight being mid 19 kgs with normally U3L grade. To grant ewes more grass in the ‘Golden period’, half of this year’s lambs will be sold store, with the remainder fattened on home turf. With the increase in costs of both energy and inputs, Mains of Murthly is looking at the best return for both staff and the farm. Reducing the winter costs is the aim of the farm.

**AgriScot Diversified Farm of the Year - The Pollock Family – Ardross Farm**

Ardross Farm is a tenanted mixed farm extending over 360 acres of beautiful coastal land in Fife. Contract farming an additional 800 acres and taking grass lets of 400 acres, the Pollock family rear Pasture for Life certified cattle and sheep, selling lamb, mutton and beef, as well as homegrown vegetables and honey, direct to the customer via their farm shop. They also sell wheat, barely, beans and oilseed rape on a commercial basis.

Set up in 2005, Ardross Farm has become a destination for locals, visitors and holiday makers alike, seeking quality homegrown produce. The connection between farm and consumer has been the keystone throughout the business’s growth, which now employs 18 locals, and customer feedback and insight continue to be at the heart of all decisions.

Committed to telling the positive stories of farming, Ardross Farm has a very active digital presence, working to promote the biodiversity, sustainability and traceability values of their enterprise, as well as agriculture in Scotland, via social media, e-newsletters and a brand-new website.

**Business Skills Winner: Jack Young –** From Carluke, Lanarkshire, studied agriculture at both SRUC Barony and Oatridge campuses. After spending some time travelling New Zealand, Jack returned home to work on the family farm full time. He is also an active member of his local Young Farmers club.

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