Press Release: The Scottish Ryeland National Show and the Aberdeen-Angus National Show

Date: 16/06/2023

This summer on Sunday 30th and Monday 31st July, The Scottish Ryeland National and The Aberdeen-Angus Society’s Summer National will be hosted by north east’s two-day agricultural event, Turriff Show.

Robert Gilchrist, Chief Executive Officer of The Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society says, “The Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society is delighted to hold once again our Summer National at the Turriff Show, we always get a great welcome at the Haughs. We are looking forward to a great entry from some of the top herds in both the area and indeed the country.”

The Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society is the regulator of Aberdeen-Angus cattle in the UK, ensuring the provenance, quality, and progression of the breed. The Society has been active since 1879, focusing on breeding quality bulls and cows that produce premium quality meat.

For centuries, the Aberdeen-Angus breed has been commemorated as the world’s leader in the cattle breeding industry when looking for top quality output and manageable cattle. In today’s world, the term ‘Aberdeen-Angus’ is recognised with so much more than just a premium quality cattle breed, it is globally known as the leading beef brand. Locally known as ‘hummlies’ and ‘doddies’, the Aberdeen-Angus breed was developed in the 19th century from the polled and predominantly black cattle of northeast Scotland.

“With Turriff being in the heartlands of the origins of the breed, it is great to be bringing our National back to Aberdeenshire,” adds Chief Executive Officer, Robert Gilchrist.

Last year's summer national winner, Mark Wattie breeds the Aberdeen-Angus at Mains of Tonley outside Alford, just three miles from where the Aberdeen-Angus originate from at Tillyfourie.

“We are proud to keep the breed alive in its roots and homeland. The Aberdeen-Angus is a hardy breed which suits our upland farm during the winter. I am now the third-generation farmer following my grandfather and father to show Aberdeen-Angus cattle and have been passionate about it from a young age,” says Mark Wattie.

Whilst in as strong a position as the breed has ever been, it is the aim of the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society to play a key role in safeguarding the industry and driving its future. The Society sets the industry standard around traceability and authentication through its Sire Verification Programme, while the Aberdeen-Angus Youth Development Programme is shaping the industry leaders for years to come.

“The Youth Development Programme is now available for all those ages 8-24 years. It is a great way to learn how to produce major show champions. I joined the programme at the age of 6 which really kickstarted a passion and success for showing,” adds Mark.

Following in the footsteps of his grandmother the Queen Mother, HRH Prince Charles is the current patron of the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society. The Prince of Wales has a successful Aberdeen-Angus herd at Highgrove and takes an active interest in the Castle of Mey herd in Caithness which is now run by The Queen Elizabeth Castle of Mey Trust. Last year HRH Princess Anne attended Turriff Show and awarded Mark with the Champion of Champion’s Trophy.

Mark adds, “It was a great honour to meet HRH Princess Anne and I look forward to The Aberdeen-Angus National Show being hosted by Turriff this year. Turriff Show always provides a great atmosphere with support from all directions and a large ring to exhibit your cattle.”

This year’s National show is being Judged by Angus Stovold of the Rosemead Herd in Surrey. He is the immediate Past President of the Aberdeen-Angus Cattle Society.

Chairman of The Scottish Ryeland Group Susan Bryden said, "The Scottish Ryeland Group is delighted to bring its annual championship to the north east of Scotland this year. We are extremely grateful to Turriff Show for hosting our championship event for a second time.”

The Scottish Ryeland Group is an independent social group supporting the work of the breeds' governing body, the Ryeland Flock Book Society. The Ryeland Flock Book Society was founded in 1903, a time that saw the establishment of a considerable number of our traditional sheep breed societies. Today, the Ryeland Flock Book Society has in the region of 1000 members made up of Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland breeders. Their aim is to encourage and safeguard pure breeding of Ryeland’s worldwide.

Northeast representative for the Ryeland’s National flock book society Raymond Aitken says, “Originating from Herefordshire, Ryeland’s are amongst one of the oldest of the established breeds in the UK. We bought our first two Ryeland’s in 1997 at Thainstone Mart. There has been a lot of fun and excitement over our many years of showing this docile and ‘easy to look after’ breed.”

Whilst the precise origin of Ryeland sheep has been lost in time, it is suggested that Ryeland’s derive from the Spanish Merino sheep. Aside from their fine fleeces, Ryeland’s are in high recognition for their quality carcasses. Ryeland Sheep sometimes produce coloured lambs. Coloured Ryeland’s do not carry a gene for whiteness and so, when bred together, always produce coloured lambs.

"Numbers of both breeds have shown a marked increase in Scotland over recent years with flocks now in existence across the whole of the country,” adds Susan Bryden.

“Exhibiting the Ryeland’s at Turriff Show is always a pleasure. It is such a well organised show with brilliant facilities for exhibitors and their livestock. This year’s national show will be a great chance to showcase the Ryeland breed in the Northeast,” says Raymond.

The Scottish Ryeland National Show is holding the Ryeland and Coloured Ryeland classes at this year’s Turriff show. Both classes will be judged by Mr Tom Redmayne from near Carlisle.

It will be a wonderful sight for all attendee’s at Turriff Show to witness to the hosting of the Scottish Ryeland National Show and Aberdeen-Angus National Show.