

**Press Release**

**[17 November 2023]**

**Appointment adds another piece to Farmstrong Scotland jigsaw**

Farmer’s daughter Clare Dickson had been dreaming of finding a job that combined the rural sector with helping people once she was ready to return to work after having her young family.

She says her appointment as Community Engagement Specialist for Farmstrong Scotland has made that dream come true.

“I knew I didn’t just want any job,” says Clare. “I wanted a role that in some way would help the agricultural community and I’m thrilled that this amazing opportunity with Farmstrong Scotland arrived at the right time.”

Clare, 38, grew up on her parents’ farm near Blyth Bridge, Peeblesshire, where she still lives with her husband, a farmer’s son who works for a machinery dealership, and her two young boys.

Before taking a career break to bring up her family Clare had spent nearly ten years with the Royal Highland Education Trust (RHET), latterly as a Network Support Coordinator, which involved getting out-and-about supporting the Project Coordinators, their committees and volunteers.

“I’m very much a people person, always have been,” says Clare. “I was heavily involved in young farmers with various office bearer roles, on stage for 13 years of concerts and always keen to try all that the organisation had to offer - well perhaps all apart from sport! My early career working in hospitality was also very much people driven.”

Clare serves on Peebles Show committee, undertaking the trophy convener role, together with her father. She is also a committee member and treasurer of Peeblesshire Agricultural Discussion Society.

“I think having these volunteer roles are good for my own personal wellbeing; that feeling of being involved with a community,” reflects Clare, who describes herself as a bit of a foodie; always happy in the kitchen cooking and baking and also enjoying eating out and socialising.

“I’m eager to start spreading the word about Farmstrong Scotland; getting out among farming and crofting communities to let them know about the programme and how they can get involved.”

The decision to launch Farmstrong in Scotland follows on from a visit by New Zealand farmer Doug Avery, who drew huge audiences when he toured the country back in 2018 to talk about his own challenges with mental health and wellbeing.

“I went to one of the Doug Avery sessions and was very moved by what he was saying, that farmers look after their stock and machinery but don’t put any value in looking after themselves,” remembers Clare.

“As we know, farmers don’t really retire, so I admire my in-laws who farm on Bute. They try to cover each other so they can get away sometimes from the farm for the weekend. My own parents and brother also make a point of getting away from the farm often. Everybody who farms or crofts knows that if you stay at home you always find a job to do!

“To be involved right from the start of a new programme is very exciting, I can’t wait to get stuck in.”

Alix Ritchie, Programme Director for Farmstrong Scotland, said: “We are delighted that Clare is joining us; she is very much a people person and I am sure she’ll hit the ground running spreading the Farmstrong Scotland message.

“It’s a very exciting time for all of us involved in the programme and we are so looking forward to sharing all its inspiring yet practical wellbeing messages with the farming and crofting communities.”

**For more information or to arrange an interview, contact Rebecca Dawes on 07792 467730 or email** **comms@farmstrongscotland.org.uk**

**Notes to editors:**

**Farmstrong Scotland is supported by RHASS and the Movember Foundation, who supported the launch of the organisation. Movember Foundation are matching every £1 raised by Farmstrong Scotland, to the sum of £350,000. Anyone wishing to donate or find out more about supporting the charity, can get in touch via** **hello@farmstrongscotland.org.uk**

The Farmstrong movement is the brainchild of New Zealand Programme Director, Gerard Vaughan, whose ethos of helping farmers and crofters to “live well, to farm well” has struck a chord with rural communities the length and breadth of the country.

**A core principle of Farmstrong Scotland is its five ways to wellbeing. These are:**

 • Connect - developing new friendships and spending time with friends. Prioritising time away from work.

• Give - Giving your time to others, be that through supporting those having a tough time or spending quality time with family.

• Take notice - Take time to pause and think about what you appreciate. Find the simple things that make you happy and pay attention to them, if only for a few moments.

• Keep learning - Be curious on and off the farm. Learning new things is good for your brain, will keep your mind active and help you farm smarter.

• Be active - Working up a sweat releases endorphins that make you feel alert and better able to cope with challenges. Make physical activity a habit, aim for at least 30 minutes of movement a day.

Trio & Tested

Three suggestions from Clare Dickson for better wellbeing

Try to make time to get a break - if you stay at home you always find a job to do!

Try to help others. “Having volunteer roles are good for my own personal wellbeing; that feeling of being involved with a community,” says Clare

Try to push yourself to learn something new. It might be a struggle at the time, but it will make you feel proud of yourself