New Release

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*For immediate use*

**Summer calendar of events kicks off at the Strathspey Monitor Farm**

The Scottish Monitor Farm team has an action-packed event planned at the Strathspey Monitor farm, Auchernack, at Grantown-on-Spey, on Monday 3 June. Future-proofing agricultural businesses is the main topic up for discussion and will be followed with a BBQ.

For many years, Auchernack Farm at Grantown-on-Spey has been demonstrating how red meat production and nature can go hand in hand on a typical Highland farm. The Smith family continues to improve their sustainable credentials to future-proof their business.

Along with industry speakers, the Smiths will be discussing how they are measuring and improving livestock efficiency, introducing hardier replacements, using locally produced digestate on grassland, and mapping and supporting farmland biodiversity.

The Smiths run 150 suckler cows and 135 store calves, with the focus on store calf production using predominantly Limousin sires. In 2023, a Shorthorn bull was introduced to the herd; his docility and easy-care genetics are hoped to improve the herd’s efficiency through the breed’s ability to thrive on rough ground and reduce the cost of their suckler enterprise. Malcolm says:

“Inviting other farmers to see what we are doing generates good discussion and challenges our ideas and thought processes about how we might approach certain aspects of the business. We are enjoying being a part of the Monitor Farm Programme, meeting the people involved is great, and we are constantly learning new things.”

Monitoring cattle weights and breed performance has helped keep a closer eye on herd efficiency and identify areas for improvement. To explain how this looks in practice, Abbie McGillivray from ScotEID Livestock Traceability will describe how the online tool ‘MyHerdStats’ helps cattle managers to gather a consistent and accurate insight to their herd performance. The tool generates insights and trends into each herd’s performance, allowing for more informed and data-led management decisions.

The Smiths are an award-winning farming family for nature. Auchernack is an ideal location to hear how NatureScot’s Biodiversity Audit tool can be used by farmers and crofters via an app, to map valuable habitats and features on their land.

Butterfly Conservation’s Tom Prescott will be sharing his knowledge about Auchernack’s butterfly and moth populations and how to enhance farmed environments in the Cairngorms to support them.

Malcolm says:

“With a clear message coming from government that any future farming support package will be linked to environmental enhancement and sustainability, it is vitally important for us to look at how we can still farm profitably, whilst doing it in harmony with nature.”

The Smiths have served the backend cows with Shorthorn bulls to get breeding replacements which are hardy, milky and of good temperament. Their aim is to use the Shorthorn’s good foraging to get better use of rougher areas while improving biodiversity by careful stocking. Calum Smith will show the young stock and explain Auchernack’s aims.

Also, up for discussion will be the cost and benefits of using digestate on grassland, led by Glenrinnes Organic Estate’s Alister Laing. Monitor Farm Regional Adviser, Peter Beattie, explains:

“Digestate from local producers brings the Smiths benefits when used carefully with their own slurry and farmyard manures. They use it to reduce artificial fertiliser use and to enhance the richness of their soils. We’ll show attendees different applications of fertiliser and digestate on a field and look for differences in grass growth.”

On the day, RSABI will benefit from a fund-raising competition to guess the combined prices of new, second hand and vintage tractors, as well as a toy tractor, which will be on display from Netherton Tractors.

The evening’s discussions will be followed by a BBQ.

**Meeting date: 3 June 2024, from 5pm.**

**Location: Auchernack Farm, Grantown on Spey, PH26 3NH**

For more information, contact Peter Beattie, Regional Adviser at pbeattie@qmscotland.co.uk or call 07769 366614.

Sign up at Upcoming Events on the Monitor Farm Website <https://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/events/>

All visitors are asked to come with clean cars, footwear and clothing for biosecurity reasons, and to car share wherever possible to help with limited parking.

ENDS

Words count 648

**Notes to editors:**

QMS is the public body responsible for promoting the Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb brands in the UK and PGI labelled Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb branded products abroad, and for promoting Scottish pork products under the Specially Selected Pork logo.

Please note that the use of the word Scotch in the Scotch Beef and Scotch Lamb 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](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk) or follow QMS on Facebook or Twitter.