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News release

Date: 3/6/24

*For immediate use*

**Book now for South Ayrshire Monitor Farm meeting on key hill farm topics**

There’s a focus on hill farming and contending with the changing farming climate at the summer open meeting of the South Ayrshire Monitor Farm.

Bookings are now open for the meeting at Blair Farm, Crosshill, Maybole, on Wednesday 26 June at 3pm, when Monitor Farmers John and David Andrew will be joined by hill livestock and grass weed specialists to discuss key farming issues and potential solutions.

John and David, who farm the 1,350 acre hill unit will be talking about their current system and production figures from their 150 suckler cows and 550 hill ewes. With a changing farming climate, how will they make the most of their suckler cows and breeding ewes on the hill and the challenges and opportunities it presents? Visitors will have a chance to see the farm and livestock and to discuss options.

They’ll be joined by Robert Ramsay, livestock farmer and SAC Consultant, who has carried out at review of the Andrew’s suckler cow system, and will be asking about what should be considered to drive a sustainable suckler cow system.

Local farmer and Management Group member David Whiteford of Maxwelston Farm, Dailly, Girvan will also be speaking, He has drastically changed his farming system from sheep grazing on the hill and cattle housed over winter, to crossbred sheep on the in-bye and his hill land growing grass over summer for deferred winter grazing for his cows, reducing wintering costs. He will talk about changing beef and sheep breeds on-farm, and about growing crops for cattle to graze in winter.

Visitors will also get a sneak preview of a new spot spraying system from Soil Essentials which will help control weeds in grassland, including docks. The SKAi system uses a smart camera system to detect target weed species and controls a sprayer, allowing spot spraying to help tackle weeds and reduce herbicide use.

Christine Cuthbertson, Monitor Farm West region adviser said: “The afternoon will give visitors the opportunity to see the livestock and ground at Blair Farm and engage with some really current issues and great guest speakers.”

A barbeque will round off the visit, and booking is essential. Car parking is very limited - car share if possible, please wear suitable outdoor clothing and sturdy/waterproof footwear and ensure good biosecurity - clean vehicles, footwear and clothing before attending. Children under 16 and dogs are not permitted.

**South Ayrshire Monitor Farm summer meeting**

Wednesday 26 June, 3pm-7.30pm at Blair Farm, Crosshill, Maybole, Ayrshire, KA19 7QQ

Booking is essential; <https://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/event/south-ayrshire-summer-meeting-26-june/>

**Ends**

***Photo caption:***

*South Ayrshire Monitor Farmers John and David Andrew will be talking at the summer meeting about where they are now with their hill farm, and what the options are going forward.*

**Notes to editors:**

About Monitor Farm Scotland:

· The Monitor Farm Scotland programme is managed by Quality Meat Scotland with support from AHDB.

· The programme is fully funded by the Scottish Government Knowledge Transfer Innovation Fund.

· The nine farms chosen to take part in this four-year programme reflect the diverse tapestry of livestock and mixed farming across Scotland.

· The aim of the programme is to help to farms reach full economic, social, and environmental sustainability by optimising production.

· The programme is farmer led and farmer driven with support from specialists and experts to assess farm performance, explore opportunities, and develop solutions to the challenges faced.

· Each Monitor Farm will be steered by a management group of 10 to 12 farming businesses with support from the local community group.

· The learnings and the example set by Monitor farms aims to benefit farmers across the whole of Scotland.

· The programme is managed by an in-house delivery team, who are funded through the programme and managed by QMS.

· For more information visit: https://www.monitorfarms.co.uk/

About QMS:

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.