



# QUALITY MEAT SCOTLAND

QMS serves Scottish beef producers as a three-in-one program.

Story & photo by **Kasey Brown**, associate editor

The Angus breed in the United States enjoys a commanding position in the beef market. That is due, in part, to the foresight of the American Angus Association Board of Directors in the late 1970s in creating Certified Angus Beef LLC. This marketing powerhouse has changed the way the country and the world see Angus beef.

Its 10 quality specifications make the *Certified Angus Beef*® (CAB®) brand the consistent, high-quality choice for consumers.

The United States also has a nationwide

marketing program called the Beef Checkoff Program. It collects \$1 per head on all cattle sold in the United States and \$1 per head equivalent on imported cattle, beef and beef products. The money is used to fund beef research and marketing efforts to increase beef demand as a whole.

Additionally, U.S. cattlemen have the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA)

program, a voluntary national program that provides guidelines for beef cattle production. The program's aim, according to its website, is to raise

consumer confidence by encouraging proper management techniques and commitment to quality within every segment in the beef industry.

Producers who are BQA-certified combine commonsense husbandry, like better recordkeeping and low-stress handling, with scientific knowledge to do the right thing and to increase profitability.

What if there were a program that combined all of these into one?

## Scotch Beef PGI

In Scotland, a program called Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) does just that. Johnny



► **Above:** Johnny Mackey (left), head of industry development for Quality Meat Scotland (QMS), says marketing and education are two major aims of QMS. Farmers like Neil Wattie Jr. (right), Mains of Toney Angus, share management practices in the Monitor Farms Project.



Mackey, head of industry development for QMS, explains that the program acts as a promotional body for red meat.

The QMS website explains that it is a public body responsible for helping the Scottish red-meat sector improve its efficiency and profitability, while enhancing Scotland's economy. The livestock sector, specifically red meat, contributes more than £2.1 billion to the annual gross domestic product of Scotland and greatly enhances the rural economy.

Much like our beef checkoff, Mackey explains that a levy, or tax, is taken from all red-meat animals depending on type, age and weight. Contrary to the U.S. beef checkoff, the levy is paid by both producers and the packing plant. The fare can change by year and differs by species. See Table 1 for fare differences between species, and payment responsibilities.

The levies, Mackey says, raise a modest sum due to the size of the Scottish livestock industry. About three-quarters of the roughly £4 million sum is used for marketing; one-quarter is used for industry development, health and education, communications and economic services. The collected amount is used to market Scotch Beef PGI, Scotch Lamb PGI, and Specially Selected Pork. The PGI stands for protected geographical indication.

This is specific to the European Union (EU) and, along with two other programs — protected designation of origin and traditional specialty guaranteed, promotes and protects names of quality agricultural products. According to the European Commission's Agriculture and Rural Development department, PGI covers agricultural products closely linked to the geographical area. At least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation takes place in the area.

Mackey notes that the PGI designation assures consumers the legal guarantee that the meat they buy has come from animals that spent their entire lives within Scotland. In addition, the Scotch Beef PGI program has very strict welfare standards that all producers must meet before marketing their livestock as Scotch Beef PGI (or Scotch Lamb PGI, etc.).

Producers must first apply for the program and pass an extensive preassessment checklist. The standards are set by QMS and assessed by Scottish Food Quality Certification (SFQC), an independent company that was

the United Kingdom's first farm and food certification business accredited to ISO Guide 65, the international standard for product certification. Extensive requirements include assurance status and traceability, animal welfare and stockmanship, health planning, medicine use, husbandry and facilities, feed and water provision, biosecurity and cleanliness, transportation and fertilizer use.



**Benefits**

Mackey explains that much of what QMS does is market these premium products and create a pull-through demand, much like the *Certified*

*Angus Beef* brand in the United States. They manage several marketing campaigns, often with dry Scottish humor. He says one of the latest campaigns was, "Wham, bam, thank you lamb."

Much of Scotland is mountainous, which is perfect for ruminants. Mackey asserts that QMS has a responsibility to build efficiencies and sustainable practices, so another large aspect of QMS is education. He notes that QMS hosts about 200 meetings per year, like America's BQA.

Generally, Mackey says, "We have a champion farm with high performance speak to other farmers. They pick up ideas better from other farmers. Sometimes, they can bring their accounts with them to work on how to improve them."

For example, the Monitor Farms Project has been around for more than 10 years, and the idea was sparked by a program in New Zealand. The program has worked to improve profitability of farms in the area, and then that farmer helps apply the practices and principles to other farms in the area. It is free for farmers to participate and it happens about six times per year. "It is a great social experiment. It's shown that a £1 investment returns £6."

He adds, "It is great to see demand for these improvement meetings; there is definitely a thirst for knowledge."

**Table 1: Quality Meat Scotland levy rates in pounds**

Species	Paid by producer per head	Paid by packing plant per head	Total levy per head
Cattle	4.20	1.30	5.50
Calves (up to 68 kg/150 lb.)	0.07	0.07	0.14
Sheep	0.60	0.20	0.80
Pigs	1.02	0.24	1.26

Notes: All figures are in pounds. These levy rates are for the year April 2014-March 2014.

Source: QMS website, [www.qmscotland.co.uk/levy-rates](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/levy-rates).

**Editor's Note:** For more information on the programs mentioned in this article, check out these resources: *Certified Angus Beef* LLC, [www.certifiedangusbeef.com/](http://www.certifiedangusbeef.com/); BQA, [www.bqa.org/default.aspx](http://www.bqa.org/default.aspx); *Beef Checkoff Program*, [www.beefboard.org/](http://www.beefboard.org/); *Scotland's QMS and Scotch Beef PGI*, [www.qmscotland.co.uk/](http://www.qmscotland.co.uk/).

