



SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES



Michael Blanche

Michael is a Knowledge Transfer Specialist with QMS. He is also a first-generation sheep farmer. He started his business in 2003 with the purchase of 50 ewes on his credit card, and some seasonal lets 35 miles from home. He now has 870 ewes and a slightly longer rental agreement with a house on the farm. He also contract shepherds another 340 ewes on a neighbouring farm.

A 2010 Nuffield Scholar, Michael had a Road to Damascus Moment whilst on his travels. He found rotational grazing and could see how it could work for him to help build his business without capital. Michael has worked from QMS since 2014, and is responsible for the conception and delivery of the Grazing Groups.



Andre van Barneveld

Born in the Netherlands, Andre's family moved to New Zealand when he was 12 years old. Starting as a farm worker, then progressing through share milking to owning his own farm, Andre has a background in pasture-based dairy farming and consultancy in New Zealand. He is now based in Ireland where he runs Graise Consultancy.

He specialises in advising on a whole farm system approach and has extensive knowledge, experience and understanding in all aspects of pasture based farming. He firmly believes that farming should be a balance between profitability and farmer satisfaction.



Trevor Cook

Trevor is a vet and sheep and beef production consultant from Totally Vets Ltd in Feilding, New Zealand. One of the most respected consultants in New Zealand, Trevor is a former winner of the NZ Landcorp prize for agricultural communication and was recently awarded 2016 Beef + Lamb New Zealand Sheep and Beef Consultant of the Year.

Although he has worked as a vet for 43 years, his knowledge and expertise extends beyond animal health. He specialises in advising farmers on all aspects production from grass based systems. His knowledge and understanding of health, nutrition and production from forage based systems is second to none.



Jim Logan

Jim Logan is QMS' Borders Grazing Group host farmer at Pirntaton, Fountainhall, Galashiels. The 570ha farm runs from 230 metres to 520 metres and has a mixture of temporary and permanent grass with a significant area of rough grazing and some fodder crops. Jim has made several changes to his system over the course of the grazing group, with a strong focus on reducing costs whilst increasing output.

Fields have been subdivided to allow better grazing management, sheep breeds and lambing date have been changed, bull breeds have changed, cows are calved outdoors in May, and youngstock are aimed to be finished at, or very close to finish off grass at the end of their second summer. Jim's system changes and better grass management have not only led to reduced costs, but also allowed him to increase ewe numbers significantly with plans to increase cattle numbers too.



Robert Fleming (Moffat event)

Robert Fleming farms in partnership with his parents at Glenluce, near Stranraer. The farming area extends to 240 Ha of grassland. Robert bulls approximately 260 mostly native bred cattle to calve from April 1st over a nine-week period. The farm also supports a small pedigree sheep flock. Being a coastal farm (from sea level to 65m above sea level), it benefits from a very long grass growing season.

In 2015, the farm became Agrii's first Forage iFarm (South Milton iFarm) to evaluate the potential of all forage diets. Through a focus on soil agronomy through monitoring pH, P, K and Mg levels, plus a move to paddock grazing Robert has grown more grass, increased livestock output per hectare, reduced his nitrogen use by 50% and reduced winter housing costs. He aims to house cattle in mid-November and turn-out growing cattle into paddocks in mid-February. More grass has given him more cattle carrying capacity for less inputs.



Michael Shannon (Perth event)

Michael farms approximately 207 acres near Thankerton, Biggar. He finishes approximately 140 to 150 head of bought in cattle (they are mostly Aberdeen Angus) using only forage with no hard feeding. He also has 295 Mule ewes which are put to a Texel Tup to produce fat lambs to finish off grass. Michael outwinters most of his cattle on kale and Swift, plus silage. There are no staff, silage and seeding work is undertaken by contractors.

Michael previously worked within the seed industry, and during a visit to New Zealand to look at low cost production systems, he had a "light bulb moment" when he saw what sort of production was possible with forages only. Upon return to the UK he set up a reasonably cheap paddock system and started to rotationally graze his cattle in daily shifts. He was astounded by the productivity he could get using only grass. He sows mostly high sugar grasses and has a relatively short rotation.



Alan Cowan

Alan farms a 170ha all grass unit in Northumberland. He runs 950 Mules and NZ Suffolk x Mules, plus 50 spring calving continental cross cows. Calves are sold off grass at 14-16 months old. The ewes scan at between 190-198% with lambs sold fat off grass from June to December. Alan is a tenant farmer, who has built his business from very little. His key aim is for low cost, high output. But he emphasises that low cost must not damage output.

Effective use of grass and forage drive his system. Cows are outwintered on kale, and the ewes are wintered on an all grass wintering paddock system. Alan pays close attention to soil pH and tests every 3-4 years. He doesn't plough, with the kale and subsequent reseed established by direct drilling. He also uses chemical topping and mowing (rather than topping) as a rotational grazing tool to help maintain grass quality during the summer, and makes good use of clover.