VALUE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE HIGHLIGHTED BY EAST LOTHIAN FINISHER

East Lothian cattle finisher Euan Smith plans to expand his cattle numbers in the coming year and is positive about the future of beef production in Scotland.

QMS VIDEO ▶

Designed with the user in mind, the benefits of SPECC are highlighted in a short video showing how East Lothian farmer Euan Smith is using the cattle checker tool. The video also shows how Euan is using EID and regular weighing to ensure his cattle are performing well.

To view the video, just visit QMS's Facebook page or **www.qmscotland.co.uk/videolibrary**

Euan is finding the Scotch Potential Eligibility Cattle Checker (SPECC) a very useful tool. SPECC, recently launched by QMS, allows farmers, auction markets and abattoirs to check whether individual animals are potentially eligible for the Scotch brand.

"SPECC allows us to check that cattle we are buying from different holdings are potentially eligible to be sold using the Scotch label.

"When you buy an animal you don't know how many holdings it has been on, and the big advantage of SPECC is that it allows you to be confident the animal has been on Scotch assured farms its whole life."

"I've also downloaded the SPECC app onto my phone. This is very easy to use and handy for when you're out and about as it allows you to enter an animal's ear tag number, wherever you are, to check it is potentially eligible for the Scotch brand.

> "Consumers want to know where their food comes from and they look for that Scotch label, which is renowned throughout the world."

Euan currently finishes 300–400 cattle each year at Cairndinnis, which is a 600 acre unit. The main crop grown on the farm is wheat, with winter and spring barley also grown and oilseed rape used as a break crop.

The farm is run by Euan, supported by staff member Murray MacDonald, and a new cattle shed on the unit is due for completion this year.

Store cattle are bought at around 12 months old weighing around 400 kgs. The cattle are sourced both privately and from local auction markets including UA Stirling and St Boswells.

Cairndinnis is a member of Quality Meat Scotland's quality assurance scheme and Euan views quality assurance as very important.

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The cattle are sold predominantly to Scotbeef at 680–700 kgs liveweight, aiming for 380kgs deadweight.

"Initially they go onto a growing ration which they are on until they are about 550kgs. At this stage, they are separated and go onto a finishing ration for the last 60–90 days."

"Our ration is based on wholecrop winter barley and about 600 tonnes of draff which is mixed in the pit with sugar beet pulp and, in some years, potatoes are added. We also grow our own feed barley, and we add pot ale syrup to make the ration more appetising and bind it together," he said.

"As we are dosing cattle when they arrive on the farm, we put an electronic tag in their ears. This is a really valuable management tool which we use for routine weighing – it makes it very simple to run cattle through our handling system and weigh them," said Euan.

Cattle are weighed every four to six weeks to make sure they are thriving and check on feed efficiency. "This allows us to keep on top of all our costings and make sure the animal is running to its full potential. It also shows up any problems at an early stage, before we might otherwise detect them," observed Euan.

Welfare is viewed as very important at Cairndinnis. "We walk through our animals every day, very often after they are fed in the morning, to make sure they are in good health and there are no problems. If we find any issues, we tackle them very quickly."

"The farm has a long history of finishing cattle, and it is something I enjoy very much and take a great pride in.

"I'm very positive about the future of cattle finishing here at Cairndinnis. We are putting up a new shed and we hope to expand our numbers.

"However, there is always scope to do things better and we are constantly looking to improve what we are doing."

SPECC CATTLE CHECKER - *Simple, quick search tool*

The Scotch Potential Eligibility Cattle Checker (SPECC) is a new tool from Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) which allows farmers, auction markets and abattoirs to check whether individual animals are potentially eligible for the Scotch brand.

SPECC, which is very easy to use and returns quick search results, makes it possible for farmers to view the status of all cattle which are currently registered on their holding(s). They can also check the status of any individual animal by manually entering the ear tag number or by scanning the short barcode at the top of the passport.

An unregistered user can also perform ear tag number searches. The following link: **www.scoteid.com/qms/specc** takes you to the ScotEID website, where SPECC is hosted. For anyone not already registered with ScotEID, a simple two-step registration process is all that is needed to start using SPECC.

A SPECC app is also available, designed for when you're out of the office, perhaps at the market and need to check the status of any animal. It allows the ear tag number to be scanned from the passport, using the mobile phone's camera or, alternatively, the ear tag number can be manually entered.

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QMS reminds scheme members of the importance of notifying accurate and up to date CPH (holding) numbers, which are associated with your Cattle & Sheep assurance scheme membership. If they are not notified, the systems for checking Scotch PGI status will not be accurate and you might encounter problems when presenting livestock for sale. If CTS links are in place, no action is required. If no CTS links are in place, all relevant CPH numbers from which cattle movements are recorded, must be notified. Please notify any CPH updates to the farm assurance office, either by emailing **agriculture@acoura.com** or by calling **0131 335 6602.**

To find out more about SPECC and get started using the tool, simply visit www.qmscotland.co.uk/specc or www.scoteid.com/qms/specc