

**Industry stakeholders launch new NIBL FQAS Standard**

After an intense review process the new Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) Standard and Rules for 2018 has officially launched.

Reviewed in line with legislative and industry initiatives, the new FQAS standard was developed by the Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) under the guidance of a Standard Setting Committee made up of stakeholders, and sees four main areas of enhancement which are designed to support scheme members in the marketing of their beef and lamb to the widest possible range of industry customers.

With farm safety being one of the major issues facing the agricultural industry at present, the new FQAS Standard is focusing on the importance of farm safety. LMC, who are an affiliate member of the Farm Safety Partnership, remain committed to raising awareness in the hope of preventing farm accidents and hope to do so through the new Standard.

Elsewhere, the subject of animal health is of paramount importance for the industry and something which is outlined in the 2018 FQAS Standard. The new Animal Health Plan gives scheme participants the opportunity to take a proactive approach to health planning and consider significant health issues, along with mortality on the farm, and encourages a reduction in the use of antibiotics where possible.

The responsible use of rodenticides to protect wildlife is also promoted within the new Standard. The standards are in line with the Campaign for Responsible Use of Rodenticides (CRRU) guidelines and by introducing new criteria NIBL FQAS has been able to ensure that rodenticides can continue to be used responsibly on farm.

Furthermore, there has also been a change in the use of agrochemicals and plant protection products. These legislative changes came into effect after the expiration of Grandfather Rights on November 26, 2015 and the introduction of testing requirements for equipment on November 26, 2016.

Speaking about the recent changes, Gillian Davis, LMC FQAS Manager explained: “The FQAS Standard is reviewed every three years by a Standard Setting Committee made up of various stakeholders such as UFU, NIMEA, NSA, NBA, NIAPA and DAERA. The review itself was a very

comprehensive process as it scrutinised every aspect of the FQAS Standard and Rules. This should be seen as a positive action by local producers, as the review is undertaken to ensure that their businesses are operating to the highest possible standards.

“It’s also worth noting that the changes to the new FQAS Standard are made in line with legislative requirements and are to ensure equivalence with other devolved assurance schemes like Red Tractor Assurance in Great Britain.”

Continuing Mrs Davis said: “Although the new Standards don’t come into effect until June 1, 2018, we distributed them last month to allow FQAS participants time to familiarise themselves with the revised Standard.

“As always if anyone is in need of assistance, there is a support system in place. LMC’s Farm Liaison Officer, Terry White, can be contacted for assistance via the FQAS helpline or at one of the regular mart clinics we operate.”

For more information contact the FQAS helpline on: 028 9263 3024.

**ENDS**

**Photo caption:**

Gillian Davis, LMC FQAS Manager, Edward Adamson, NSA, Elliott Bell, UFU, Ian Stevenson, LMC Chief Executive and Conall Donnelly, NIMEA, pictured showcasing the new NIBL FQAS Standard and Rules for 2018.

For more information contact LMC on: 028 9263 3000

**Media contacts:**

Gillian Davis, FQAS Manager

Nicola Mulligan, LMC Communications Officer

**Date:** Thursday, March 8, 2018