



FQAS NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND BEEF & LAMB FARM QUALITY ASSURANCE SCHEME

AUTUMN/WINTER 2017



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF FARM QUALITY ASSURANCE 1992 - 2017



The Future is Bright for Northern Ireland Beef & Lamb Farm Quality Assurance

The Livestock and Meat Commission for Northern Ireland (LMC) hosted a celebratory dinner to mark 25 years of the Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (NIBL FQAS) on November 7 at the La Mon Hotel, Belfast.

The celebration saw over 220 guests in attendance which included a great number of randomly selected farmers who have been members of the FQAS for 25 years. Joining our farmer members at the dinner were industry representatives and stakeholders from a range of organisations including; DAERA, UFU, NBA, NSA, NIAPA, NIMEA, NIFCC, Invest NI, LMC Board, LMC Staff, LMC School Cookery Demonstrators and representatives from other UK Levy Bodies. LMC was delighted that

a number of people who worked to establish the scheme in 1992 were also able to join us for the evening.

Currently there are over 12,000 members in the NIBL FQAS, approximately 1,200 of which joined in the first year of the schemes establishment.

At the event Ian Stevenson, LMC Chief Executive and NIBL FQAS Chairman thanked all of the industry stakeholders who have been working with the scheme over the years. Ian also paid tribute to the NIBL FQAS farmers, whose passion and commitment have ensured the scheme's success over the past quarter of a century.

The key note speaker at the event was Professor Patrick Wall from University

College Dublin (UCD). Professor Wall highlighted the importance of NIBL FQAS as a point of differentiation in the post Brexit era. He stressed the need to drive home the message that the red meat industry in Northern Ireland has something special in terms of the high quality beef and lamb produced here and challenged the industry to stop talking about our 'green image' and start talking about our 'green reality'.

He concluded by underlining the importance of the Scheme as we look to the future and the next 25 years and stated that the NIBL FQAS will be the "saviour" for farmers in Northern Ireland once the United Kingdom leaves the European Union.



L-R: Ian Stevenson (CEO LMC), Richard Wright, Noel Lavery (DAERA), Campbell Tweedie (NIMEA), Barclay Bell (UFU), Gerard McGivern Chairman LMC), Professor Patrick Wall (UCD)

Free Event for Beef & Lamb Producers, Processing Plant Visits



New FQAS Standards and Rules

FQAS participants will be aware that the NIBL FQAS standards and rules are formally reviewed every 3 years.

The FQAS standards and rules are reviewed by the FQAS Standard Setting Committee; therefore all stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in the review. It is vital that FQAS continues to develop with the needs of the industry and the market place it supplies. This revised standard and associated rules will provide further assurance to customers (abattoirs, wholesalers, retailers and consumers) that beef and lamb sourced from farm quality assured producers continues to be produced to the highest standards.

Many of the proposed changes in this review are in line with new legislative requirements and it is important too that the scheme retains equivalence with the other beef and lamb quality assurance schemes in Great Britain which are eligible to carry the Red Tractor logo. As shown in Table 1 the majority of changes to the NIBL FQAS standards are due to legislative changes since the last review in 2014. There are some elements of the standard which have also been re-worded or clarified to ensure there is no ambiguity. Participants will see more significant changes in the following sections:

Animal Health Planning

A new simplified yet more effective Animal Health Plan template has been devised to assist producers to proactively think about herd/flock health planning. The new plan also gives participants the opportunity to consider significant health issues/mortality on farm and reduce antibiotic use where possible.

Responsible Use of Rodenticides

These standards are aimed at reducing the use of second generation rodenticides which can have a detrimental effect on wildlife. The standards are in line with CRRU (Campaign for Responsible Use of Rodenticides) guidelines, the organisation responsible for rodenticide stewardship. By introducing these standards NIBL FQAS has been able to ensure that rodenticides can continue to be used responsibly on farm when it is appropriate to do so.

Use of Agrochemicals and Plant Protection Products

These legislative changes came into effect following the expiration of Grandfather Rights on 26th November 2015 and the introduction of testing requirements for equipment on 26th November 2016.

Farm Safety

A new standard has been included to raise awareness of the importance of Farm Safety within FQAS. LMC are an affiliate member of the Farm Safety Partnership and are committed to raising awareness to prevent farm accidents.

All FQAS participants will be provided with a hard copy of the revised standards and rules in early 2018. A period of time will be given for producers to familiarise themselves with the changes before they are implemented in full. **Conformance with the new/revised standards will be recorded at inspections completed on or after 1st June 2018.** All changes within the standard have been clearly identified in Table 1 and within the standard are marked with "Amended" or "New" in the left hand column.

The Farm Liaison Officer Terry White will be on hand via the FQAS helpline to participants who require assistance with the revised standards either pre/post inspection. Terry will also continue to provide Mart Clinics at various Livestock Marts in Northern Ireland to assist producers on the ground.

Terry's Direct line: 028 92 633 024

Look out for the New Standard in Feb/Mar 2018, it is this book that must be used from 1st June 2018

As part of the NIBL FQAS celebrations LMC visited a number of farms speaking with some of the members who have been in the Scheme for 25 years.

Here's what they had to say

Downpatrick

25 year FQAS member Edward Carson farms a mixed farm consisting of suckler cows, beef cattle, sheep and arable across 800 acres.

On the farm male calves are finished at 16 months



with heifers taken through to 22 months. The 300 ewe flock lamb in February with all stock finished off grass during the summer months.

On a visit to the farm during the Summer Edward credited the scheme for providing the beef and sheep industry with positive promotion and also said that the traceability system has contributed to a stable market for quality Northern Irish red meat.

Saintfield

25 year FQAS member Crosby Cleland farms a sheep enterprise across 160 acres.

Crosby runs a flock of 800 ewes. The bulk of his flock is made up of pure Lleyn bloodlines. These are



crossed with Highlander and Belclare rams to produce high quality commercial ewe replacements.

Crosby says that the FQAS is a fundamental requirement and also claims that the actual inspection process is a major help in ensuring that the farm is fit for purpose in relation to cross compliance and will help to widen the farm's market place in the future.

Limavady

25 year FQAS member Hugh McCollum farms a mixed enterprise of beef, sheep and cereals across 300 acres. The farm produces about 350 beef cattle each year, mostly Aberdeen Angus with 90 Spring lambing ewes, approximately 100 additional store lambs purchased to



finish and 70 acres of Spring Barley.

Hugh was quick to confirm the importance of the NIBL FQAS and made the comment that in every walk of life, we must meet standards. When we use the roads or avail of the health service, we rightly expect that the standard of service on offer is up to scratch. In the same vein, beef and lamb producers must be expected to meet the quality standards which consumers demand.

Cullion

The Lowry brothers Stephen and Robert farm a mixed suckler, beef and sheep enterprise across 1,000 acres on the outskirts of Derry/Londonderry.

The farm runs approximately 150 Spring calving suckler cows, 800 beef cattle for

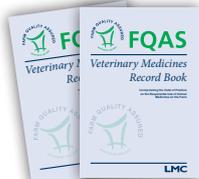


finishing, 200 Spring lambing ewes and purchases 800 store lambs to finish over the Autumn/Winter. The farm runs Aberdeen Angus bulls with their suckler cows and purchase mostly Aberdeen Angus store cattle to finish. On a visit to the Lowry farm, the brothers stated that initially the Scheme didn't offer as much back to the farmer in terms of an improved price, however today FQAS is essential for beef and sheep finishers given the price differential that now exists.

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Table 1: Key Changes in the 2018 NIBL FQAS Standard

Standard	Format of change	Change
2.1 Animal Health	Revised Standard	To strengthen standards in Calf Welfare it will be a requirement that housed calves must be inspected by the farmer/ stockperson at least twice a day. This requirement is currently stipulated in the Welfare Codes for Cattle and Sheep.
2.4 Animal Health	Revised Standard-New Template	A revised Animal Health Plan template has been designed to encourage participants to be more proactive in health planning. The key features are an Animal Health Plan Activities calendar which allows participants to mark which disease prevention measures have been planned throughout the year. A template has also been provided to give participants the opportunity to consider significant health issues and mortality on farm. These tools are essential for producers to ensure herd/flock health is reviewed and monitored and consideration is given to reducing antibiotic use where possible.
2.14 Animal Health	Additional information in Veterinary Medicine Record	 <p>It will be a requirement to record the following within the Veterinary Medicine Record:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date withdrawal period ends (to assist producers in determining when cattle/sheep are eligible for slaughter following withdrawal periods for veterinary medicines) • Reason for treatment (to assist producers in considering why certain veterinary medicines are being used)
3.19 Animal Nutrition	Revised Standard	 <p>The Campaign for Responsible Rodenticide Use (CRRU) is leading an industry initiative to reduce the use of second generation rodenticides which can have a detrimental effect on wildlife. From 1 January 2018 FQAS participants can continue to purchase rodenticides as FQAS Standards now align with the industry guidelines. Producers will be required to keep a bait plan as outlined in revised standards.</p>
7.5 Environmental Care	Revised Standard & Additional Rationale	In order to prevent pollution of waterways it is a legal requirement to soil test if using Phosphorus fertilizer. This is detailed in the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) and Phosphorus Regulations. Producers must also keep records if importing/exporting slurry.
7.7 Environmental Care	Revised Standard	 <p>This standard has been revised to ensure that any agrochemicals are stored, applied and disposed of in a manner that prevents contamination and pollution.</p> <p>Following the expiration of the “Grandfather Rights” in November 2015 it is a requirement that any operator who applies Plant Protection Products (PPP’s) such as pesticides must hold a certificate of competence.</p> <p>Records of application of PPP’s must also be kept as outlined in revised standards.</p> <p>In November 2016 it became a requirement to ensure that spraying equipment is also tested before it can be used or within 5 years of purchase. Producers must provide a valid certificate if required.</p>
8.3 Farm Procedures	New Standard	This Standard requires FQAS participants to sign a declaration to state they understand the farm safety elements of the FQAS Standard to raise awareness of farm safety.