

SLMG NEWSLETTER

SHETLAND LIVESTOCK MARKET GROUP

Native Shetland Lamb wins New Product Marketing Award

Shetland Livestock Marketing Group is delighted to announce that Native Shetland Lamb has won the 'New Product Marketing' award at the Scotland Food and Drink Excellence Awards 2012. The winners were unveiled at the awards ceremony at the Dunblane Hydro Hotel by Doubletree Hilton on Thursday 24th May.



Shetland Livestock Marketing Group representatives Kirsty Halcrow and Isabel Johnson collect their award from host Hardeep Singh Kohli (left) and sponsors representative Adam Hardie.

The Scotland Food and Drink awards are known as the 'Oscars' of the food and drink industry and recognise those businesses in Scotland who are leading the way with innovation, enterprise and quality.

The New Product Marketing award was evaluated on innovation and creative brand development as well as the success and effectiveness of the marketing campaign.

Chairman of the Shetland Livestock Marketing Group, Ronnie Eunson, said: "We are absolutely thrilled that Native Shetland Lamb has received such a prestigious accolade. Just to be shortlisted was recognition enough but to go on and win, really is a great achievement.

"Our marketing strategy for Native Shetland Lamb was to position it as a high end, premium and exclusive product. We have been working together with Shaw Marketing and Design on this initiative over the past 12 months and are very pleased with what we have achieved.

"I believe that this endorsement will create wider recognition which, in turn, will help drive sales at the premium end of the market."

Judges described the product as very good – nice, succulent, lovely, clean and flavoursome, while the entry was exciting with well thought out and well executed marketing.

Quality stock and high prices at spring show and sale

Quality stock and high prices were received at Shetland Livestock Marketing Group's annual spring show and sale, which was held on Wednesday, 4 April 2012 at the Lerwick Marts. Commercial buyer, Mr Tom Gray from Mintlaw was invited to Shetland to judge the show and he declared a Charolais Cross (Steer) from David Leslie, Niaroo, Gott as the overall champion which weighed 435kg and sold for £1,150. Commenting on the event Mr Gray said: "I was very impressed with the overall standard on show today – it's a pity there weren't more cattle entered as I would have been interested in buying more."

The prizes awarded for Steers and Heifers were as follows:

Steers Category: first prize was awarded to David Leslie, Niaroo, Gott and second and third prize went to J&A Sinclair, Sandlodge Farm, Sandwick.

Heifer Category: first, second and third prize all went to J&A Sinclair, Sandlodge Farm, Sandwick

A total of 168 sheep and 151 cattle were sold at the event. Auctioneer, Rod Mackenzie said: "All classes sold at extremely high rates which we have never experienced here before.

"The quality of cattle was high with Steers averaging 226.6p per kilo, with an average price per head of £944.53 and Heifers averaging 213.5p per kilo, with an average price per head of £802.73."

Shetland Livestock Marketing Group would like to thank Harbro who sponsored the event.

Great start to 2012

The first few sales of 2012 have got off to a great start with an excellent sale of livestock held on Wednesday 29 February. Many of the cattle on offer made in excess of £1,000, with two bullocks from Messrs Budge, Bigton Farm realising £1,365 and £1,350. Yearling animals were selling at £1,050 and £1,100 and all the vendors were extremely happy with the results. This trend continued for the spring show and sale and we anticipate that these high prices will remain throughout the 2012 sales season.

Abattoir update

The value of cattle and pigs processed through the abattoir in 2012 (Jan - May) has almost reached £86,000.

Early season sale

In order to provide more options for producers who wish to sell prime stock, we have decided to begin the 2012 sales season with an early sale on Friday, 24th August.

New sheep line installed



The new sheep line has been installed at the Shetland Abattoir and we have been granted Conditional Approval by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to commence operations.

We are planning to process all lambs and sheep at the new facility, however we will maintain the Laxfirth slaughterhouse in the short-term to allow for any overflow in the busy months of September and October.

Breawick Agri has done a fantastic job building the new sheep line and we'd like to take this opportunity to thank them for all their work on the project.

SLMG report

A report detailing the marketing activity and performance of the new abattoir to date has been presented to Shetland Islands Council. The paper concludes:

The build of the new abattoir and its future goes beyond commercial value as it aims to secure a future for an industry that is integral to the social and environmental welfare of Shetland.

The agricultural industry is dependent on the 'added value' services that SLMG provides. It is strengthened by the organisation and the local service, which opens up real opportunities to diversify and build local businesses.

Operating within very limited resources, SLMG has adopted a clear and very practical strategy to function effectively over the last year. By outsourcing its marketing work and channelling sales through private companies, SLMG has been able to focus solely on its operational activity and act as a service provider to its members. The very obvious weakness in this model is the absence of an overall manager.

Maintaining quality in terms of both product and service at all times cannot be overstated, so it is crucial that this is overseen by an operational manager. Feedback from customers confirm that, as SLMG moves away from direct sales to a service provider, a level of customer care must be maintained that is consistent with the brand and product quality.

Through the delivery of this project, it is clear that native Shetland lamb is a highly sought after product and can command a premium in the marketplace. The unique size, flavour and composition has particular appeal with food connoisseurs today. While conventional and cross bred animals have their place, the native breed has gained a real cachet and can definitely achieve significant margins for producers willing to explore marketing opportunities and deliver butchered product.

By introducing the 'Native Shetland Lamb' mark and quality criteria, we now have a mechanism in place that, through time and with the right marketing effort, can become recognised and valued in the same way as the French Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC).

Challenges to overcome are:

SEASONALITY - Native lamb is at its best from September to December. Careful marketing can add to its exclusivity and the kudos that it holds by creating demand in the lead up to the season. An informed audience responds well to a short season and demand increases during this defined period.

DISTANCE TO MARKET - As with all exports from Shetland, transport costs are prohibitive and have a significant impact on margins. With that in mind, the first step must be conquering the local market. Plans are in place to target butchers, retailers, restaurants and cafés,

and explore larger trade customers. Outside Shetland, the focus will be on high end restaurants and consumers that are happy to pay a premium for a superior product. The most cost-effective way to reach these markets is to work closely with sales companies and target any marketing activity directly.

CONTINUITY OF QUALITY AND SUPPLY - If we are to charge premium prices, we need to consistently supply a premium product. We have established a list of quality criteria but we need to go further. Ideally, each order leaving the abattoir should be quality checked and branded.

The value of the investment in the abattoir and the work that has been done since it opened is significant. The infrastructure and foundations are now in place to take the industry forward.

This is a unique project in so much as it is more than just a business with a conventional plan and financial targets: it is a lifeline service to the agricultural industry, which, with the right support, will accrue real value to not only the industry, but the entire community over time.

Successful event for MLM Engineering

Orkney based company MLM Engineering were delighted with the high turnout and sales at their open day and evening which was held at the Shetland Marts in March 2012 marking their fifth anniversary.

They had a wide range of products on display including the new 6210R tractor, JD baler, gator, fertiliser spreader and lots more, with an evening presentation from a John Deere representative rounding off the event.

If you are interested in hosting a similar event or would like to find out more about the advertising opportunities available through SLMG please contact Hazel Mackenzie on **01595 696300** for more information.



Briggs' Shetland Lamb endorsed by Good Housekeeping magazine

Briggs' Shetland Lamb was the runner up in the 'Small Meat Producer' category at the Good Housekeeping Food Awards 2012 held at Lancaster House, London on Wednesday 23 May 2012.

The 'Small Meat Producer' category – in association with Slow Food UK – was decided by a panel of Good Housekeeping magazine's food experts. The panel aimed to honour produce which endorses good animal welfare, minimal environmental impact, and fair prices. Richard Briggs said "I was delighted to be shortlisted, it is a great endorsement for Native Shetland Lamb.

"I was also very honoured to receive third place in the 'Local Food Hero' category. I had no idea that I had been nominated and can only assume that I was included because of the number of events I attend to represent Scottish crofting produce in general, and Briggs' Shetland Lamb in particular."

2012 sale dates

August	
Friday 24th	Early season sale of lambs and cattle
September	
Saturday 8th	Prime and store lambs
Wednesday 12th	Unst sheep sale
Friday 14th	Prime and store lambs and all classes of cattle
Saturday 15th	Yell sheep sale
Friday 21st	Prime and store lambs
Saturday 22nd	Prime and store lambs
Friday 28th	Prime and store lambs
Saturday 29th	Shetland Flock Book females (10am) followed by all breeds of breeding ewes, gimmers and ewe lambs
October	
Friday 5th	Pony sale
Friday 5th (5.30pm)	Evening sale of tups
Saturday 6th	All classes of sheep
Friday 12th	All classes of sheep
Saturday 13th	Shetland Flock Book males
Wednesday 17th	Sale of weaned calves and all classes of store and breeding cattle
Friday 19th	All classes of sheep
Saturday 20th	All classes of sheep
Saturday 27th	All classes of sheep followed by breeding tups
November	
Saturday 3rd	Final sale of all classes of cattle and sheep

The 2012 sale dates are subject to change and updates can be viewed online at www.slmg.co.uk

If you are interested in selling livestock, please contact Hazel on **01595 696300** or email hazel@tasteshetland.com