

The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



Michael and Fiona Burns

Michael and Fiona are enjoying their first year farming their 114 hectare tenancy at Glenside Farm (plus 52ha seasonal let), with their two young children, Katie and Robert.

Both Michael and Fiona are from farming families, and have spent the last 7 years working towards securing a farm tenancy. A Forestry Commission starter farm tenancy became available for tender in March 2013, and they submitted a business plan in April 2013. They were selected for an interview in June and found out two weeks later they had been successful. They moved into the farmhouse in Ayrshire in September to begin their 10 year tenancy.

Since this time they have built up a flock of 250 Blackface and Cheviot cross breeding ewes, along with 8 Limousin and 18 Galloway cattle on the grassland unit.

It has been a juggling act with the farm, a young family and Michael keeping on his full time job. Both Michael and Fiona work part-time on the farm and work in unison, taking on appropriate tasks to enable the farm to run smoothly.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced as a new entrant?

There have been a few challenges ranging from, the lack of additional Scottish Government funding for new entrants, to competing with established farmers to buy stock in the auction ring.

Case Studies

Learn from the experiences of other new entrants in a series of case studies.

Guidance notes are also available which are tailored specifically to assist new entrants to farming, with their business needs.

Find further information, including links to other case studies and the guidance notes, at www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants

This programme is funded by the Scottish Government as part of its New Entrants to Farming Advisory Activity.



What hurdles have you had to overcome?

Providing a strong enough application to even get an interview was our first hurdle. Once we had secured the tenancy we had to set up the business, and settle into the lifestyle.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

Michael and I put together the initial business plan for the tenancy with the assistance of our local agricultural consultant, for the final details. She had previous experience of Forestry Farm bids and provided excellent assistance. Our consultant also assisted with gathering the documentation required for the bank. The Royal Bank of Scotland has been very supportive with finance and suggesting useful contacts. It really is worth looking round for someone that is enthusiastic about the business.

Parents and siblings have provided advice along with some financial support. When we were first awarded the tenancy we received small financial gifts from various family and friends, which all helped to establish the farm.

What is your main motivation to farm?

It's a good lifestyle for the family and we have our own personal goal to establish a successful business.

“Don't be discouraged if you are knocked back, follow your dream and keep motivated.”

Fiona & Michael Burns



What advice would you give to someone thinking of entering the industry?

Ensure you know your business plan inside out for an interview so you are prepared for any questions. It will enable you to give stronger answers in interviews as the answers you provide reflect you and your business. You will need to work hard but it will be worth it.

What are your future ambitions?

Our future goal is to save enough money to put towards a future tenancy. Having already been through the process with this tenancy we feel this will provide a competitive edge in any future applications.

Looking for some more information?

There is a network of new entrants across the country who are in various stages of developing their businesses and achieving their goals. You can contact this network through various streams including:

- Regional workshops
- Facebook (www.facebook.com/NewEntrants)
- Website (www.sruc.ac.uk/newentrants)

For more details contact

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