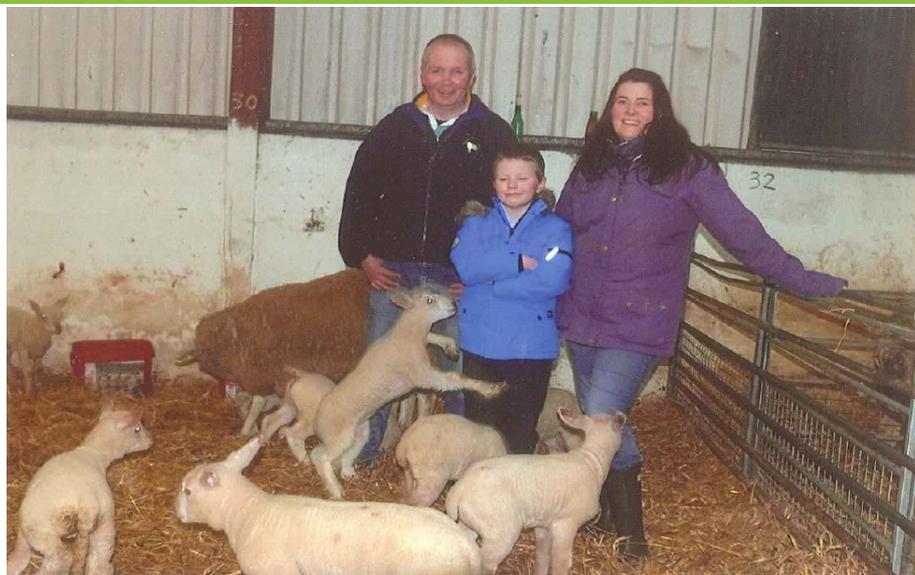


The Scottish Government's New Entrants to Farming Programme



Sandy, Kirsteen and Alexander Douglas

The local Caithness family were successfully awarded a 10 year Limited Duration Tenancy on the Forest Enterprise Scotland Starter Farm on the 1st April 2015 at Achnamoine Farm, near Spittal in Caithness.

Achnamoine extends to 101ha, with 56ha being ploughable improved grassland and the remaining 45ha being rougher in quality.

Sandy was brought up on his family's small holding at Bower in Caithness and has a strong agricultural background. He worked locally on several farms before taking on the role of Head Yardsman with Aberdeen and Northern Marts in 2006.

Sandy's dream was always to have his own farm, but as we all know

the reality of this is very difficult to achieve and opportunities very rarely present themselves. The family are looking forward to running a successful business at Achnamoine where they can build up their herd of 6 heifers and approx. 300 ewes combining a small pedigree flock of Bluefaced Leicester and Charollais, as well as a commercial flock of predominately blackface ewes to establish and develop a prosperous business for their future.

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

The biggest challenge to date has been the fact that the farm was pretty rundown on entry with a lot of old grass, poor soil nutrient values and poor stock fencing which has hampered the preferred grazing regime.

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 it's New Entrants to Farming Advisory Activity.



What hurdles have you had to overcome?

The main hurdle for the family has been the lack of subsidy available during the initial start up year where costs have often been excessive. There has been a lot of expenditure to initially build the business for example increasing stock numbers, investing to improve grassland quality and purchasing basic items of machinery initially with very little income to cover these costs.

The business made an application to the National Reserve and would hope that Basic Payment will be awarded in early 2016—but this is almost 12 months after the business started. Sandy was not entitled to the Young Farmer Start-up Grant as he was over 40.

What advisory assistance have you received?

The family prepared their own business plan and asked a local consultant to look over the figures and make any recommendations.

What is your main motivation to farm?

To establish a good quality flock, a robust business and have a good quality of life for the family.

“Believe in yourself and embrace new skills”

Sandy Douglas



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

Follow your dreams, don't be scared to try new things and believe in yourself.

Be aware of what subsidy funding is actually available to your situation and be prepared to work hard for it!

What are your future ambitions?

To develop the business in such a way that as the tenancy opportunity ends at Achnamoine the business can be moved to another location and continue to thrive. The system must be simple, financially viable and breeds selected to endure the climatic demands of the far North

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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