

Black is Beautiful

There is no doubt that the strong links to local top quality beef would have boosted Neil Watt's nomination to become the Countryside Alliance's Scottish Retailer of the Year. He is in an extremely fortunate position to have one of the country's most exacting producers on his doorstep.



Prime cuts of Glenbervie Pedigree Aberdeen Angus are available exclusively from Watt the Butchers in Montrose. Committed to providing the finest quality beef in the world, Glenbervie Pedigree Aberdeen Angus is a dynamic and forward-thinking, family-owned company. Their beef is produced with integrity using the very best in traditional farming practises.

The north-east of Scotland is renowned for excellent grassland and a strong tradition of family-owned farms. This provides the perfect location to produce quality beef cattle. The name Glenbervie Pedigree Aberdeen Angus is synonymous with quality and a distinctive flavour and they consistently set standards which others strive to emulate.



Situated in the heart of rural Kincardineshire, the Glenbervie Estate is one of Scotland's finest. It is home to the renowned suckler herd of Glenbervie Pedigree Aberdeen Angus cattle. The present owners, Alastair and Fiona Macphie, can trace their direct ancestors to over 700 years, with continuous succession of managing the Glenbervie estate. Superbly located on the Bervie River, the 2,000 acre Glenbervie Estate has rich, rolling farmland and mature woodland providing idyllic conditions for the rearing of pedigree Aberdeen Angus cattle.





The pure-bred herd was founded in 1992, with the purchase of two outstanding quality bulls, known as Castle of Mey Quartz, bred by HM Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, and Loyal of Hurdcott, bred by Lord and Lady Glendyne. This laid the foundations for the development of a top-class commercial breeding herd. The emphasis on high quality breeding stock has proved highly successful. The herd has been built to 200 pedigree cows and 6 pedigree bulls and it has become one of the largest herds in Scotland. Bulls can be bred on the farm but four have been purchased in; two from QMS Chairman Donald Biggar, one from J Playfair Hannay at Kelso and one from Colin Davidson on Orkney.

The Glenbervie philosophy is simple and they believe that quality beef should be produced using traditional methods that are both good for you and good for the environment.

With meticulous attention to bloodlines, animals are bred and fed on the Glenbervie Estate. All of their beef has full traceability through generations. The Glenbervie Pedigree Aberdeen Angus herd is reared and perfected by Farm Manager, John Lohoar, and his team of experienced stock men. John and his team are passionate about all aspects of quality, traditional beef production, from the field to the plate.

The distinctive black cattle are raised naturally on lush pastures and enjoy the best possible diet throughout their lives. The Scottish climate provides ideal conditions with the summer days being two hours longer and rain-fall that is 2 inches heavier than in the south. In the summer months the cattle graze on our grassy pastures that are rich in clover. A coastal location, with sea to the south and the east, means that they are exposed to sea-spray that is rich in iodine and salt. During the winter months, the herd is housed in modern, purpose built buildings and fed on turnips, hay and silage.

Animal welfare is a top priority. When it comes to slaughter, the process is as quick and painless as possible. Cattle 'races' are used to familiarise animals with handling methods before the fateful trip to the abattoir in Inverurie. This ensures that stress is kept to a minimum and avoids giving the animals a rush of adrenaline, which could taint the flavour of the beef.



Superb farmland, pedigree stock, natural feed, the highest standards of animal husbandry and welfare, and stringent compliance with European regulations ensures that Neil Watt's customers have complete confidence in their beef and guarantees that they enjoy the most exclusive beef on the market.

Farm Manager John Lohar explained how the Montrose public turned out to be the privileged ones since the original idea some 15 years ago was to run 200 pedigree Aberdeen Angus cows to produce fattened cattle for the top class butchers in London.

"It was too much grief. I am far better working with one butcher. We decided to deal with Neil Watt in Montrose and its working fine."

All the steers go to the Montrose butcher and in conjunction with Alex Sanger at Prettycur Farm near Montrose, the two farms produce enough to keep this butcher going for 52 weeks of the year. Both have similar sized herds of 550 head of cattle at any one time. 200 cows, fattening steers, replacement heifers, in calf heifers and young stock.

John sees great benefit in working closely with Neil:-

"He can visit the Farm and see the next cattle that will be going off fat for him. You have a finger on the pulse both ways - he can check on us and likewise we go in and see the meat for sale. We are making sure that we are all driving in the same direction - and it works well."

"This is production for the premium end of the market and you have to change your working practices. We kill cattle before they are two years old. The next lot to go are up to their optimum 350 kilos weight but they wouldn't have been two years old until April. Anything over 350 kilo weight is too big. If you get them too light or they are not fat enough that's a problem, so you have a window to work with from 330 kilos up to 360. If you can get them like that every single week, that ensures we supply the same fat cover, same weight, same age, same breed every time.



"We understand that you cannot work with inconsistency. You need to cook the beef and present it the same - whatever. Everything is done exactly the same every single week of the year.

"We feed them all the same way, albeit they are on a forage based diet in the winter and grass in the summer. They are slaughtered in the same place. Transport is always the same. We are ruling out all the variables to get it down to as tight a spec as we can. It's just like peas in a pod farming.

"We calf in January, April and August. Alex has some that calf in October and December. That gives us a spread through the whole year.

"The bulls are shared between Alex and ourselves. Then we have the same genetics within the whole lot. All the stock is certified by the Aberdeen Angus Society.

"Everything that we are doing is as pure Aberdeen Angus as you can possibly get it. Any other type of cow on an Angus bull gives you too much variation in size, eating quality, meat texture. This way your beef eats the same and your marbling fat tends to be the same within them as well.

Consistency is the theme that keep coming through the conversation as John whisks you around the farm in his silver four wheel drive Nissan and he explained the winter diet:-

"It's a forage based diet, that's what they want. Silage, straw, home grown barley and a 20% concentrate mix from the local supplier a mile and a half down the road. The reason we work with them is because we can go down and say 'this is what we want' because that is going to give us our input into our cattle. The mix is beet pulp, maize gluten, barley grains, wheat grains – all high protein stuff – blended to give us a 20% protein mix."

In addition to that Glenbervie grown barley and straw, home grown silage. 90% of the diet is all home produced and they have all the costs under control. Some cattle were outside in January but all will be outside on grass from May to October.

Glenbervie Pedigree Aberdeen Angus and Watts use the world wide reputation of Aberdeen Angus, it is a good story but an even more impressive visit. www.glenbervieaberdeenangus.com

