



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

SOUTH AYRSHIRE

Summer Open Meeting Report
24 June 2026



FENCLINES AND FINISH LINES

MEETING REPORT

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Around **35** members of the farming community attended the meeting.

The final summer meeting was the right time to deep dive into the adoption of **Virtual Fencing** and the impact of **lamb finish weights** through the supply chain.

Attendees watched an interview with **John and David** and project adviser **Dr Tony Waterhouse** before talking through the findings.

Virtual Fencing Trial – Blair Farm Overview

John and David Andrews are trialling **virtual fencing technology** with **25 in-calf heifers** on a **200-acre block** of their 1,000-acre hill farm at Blair Farm. The system uses **GPS-enabled collars** and a smartphone app to create **flexible virtual grazing boundaries**, enabling livestock to be **managed remotely** without the need for **permanent fencing**.

Video Updates

The group watched the **update** videos below before Dr Tony Waterhouse led **discussion** with John and David on how they are using the system this **grazing season**.

VIDEO 1



Can Virtual Fencing Help Shape the Future of Scottish Livestock Farming?

41 views • 3 days ago

VIDEO 2



How does Virtual Fencing Work?

One of the **key benefits** has been the ability to **graze higher areas of Blair Hill** that had previously been difficult to utilise. This has led to the **return of cattle**, and more recently sheep, to areas that had become under-grazed, **improving both grazing utilisation and accessibility**.

A particularly encouraging finding in the second year of the trial has been that cattle which wore collars during Year 1 appeared to **remember the training process** and **adapted back into the virtual fencing system** very easily. This suggests that the learning achieved during initial training can be retained, reducing the effort required when animals return to the system.

Future Plans

Having assessed the wide range of benefits delivered by **virtual fencing**—including **improved grazing management, better livestock control, enhanced monitoring, and increased utilisation of hill ground**—John and David have decided to invest further in the technology.

They have purchased an **additional 25 collars**, allowing a larger proportion of the herd to be managed through the system and creating further opportunities to optimise grazing across the farm.

Conclusion

Virtual fencing has demonstrated **clear practical benefits** at Blair Farm, **improving control of livestock** while unlocking previously **underutilised grazing resources**. The ease with which previously trained cattle returned to the system in **Year 2** has further strengthened **confidence in the technology**. The decision to invest in an **additional 25 collars** reflects John and David's belief that **virtual fencing** can play an important role in improving the **efficiency, flexibility and long-term sustainability** of their hill farming enterprise.



Being Monitor Farmers

Reflecting on their Monitor Farm journey, John and David Andrews highlighted how the experience has encouraged them to take a **longer-term view** of the business and be **accountable** for the changes they are making. While some improvements can be seen quickly, many of the decisions taken over the last few years – particularly around **cattle breeding, sheep management, nutrition, rotational grazing** and **virtual fencing** – will take time before their full impact becomes clear.

David noted that the real value of the Monitor Farm programme has been the opportunity to **challenge their thinking, test new ideas** and **measure progress** over time. Changes to breeding policies and grazing management are **investments in the future**, and the benefits are often only fully realised several years down the line. As a result, they see the next **four years** as an important period to build on the foundations that have already been put in place.



The family believes that continuing to **review performance, share experiences** and remain **accountable** for the decisions they make will be key to **future success**. Technologies such as **virtual fencing** and **rotational grazing** are still providing **new learning opportunities**, and John and David are keen to better understand how these tools can improve **productivity, efficiency and the utilisation of their ground**.

Looking ahead, they hope visitors returning to visit in **four years'** time will be able to see the **longer-term benefits** of the changes being made today. While the farm may not look dramatically different on the surface, they expect to have a business that is **more resilient, more efficient** and better positioned for the future, with management decisions continuing to be driven by **evidence, learning, and continuous improvement**.

The evening finished with a delicious BBQ provided by Dalmellington County Meats and a walk to see the cattle's second year on rotational grazing.



Lamb Finishing

Gordon Newlands, QMS Brands

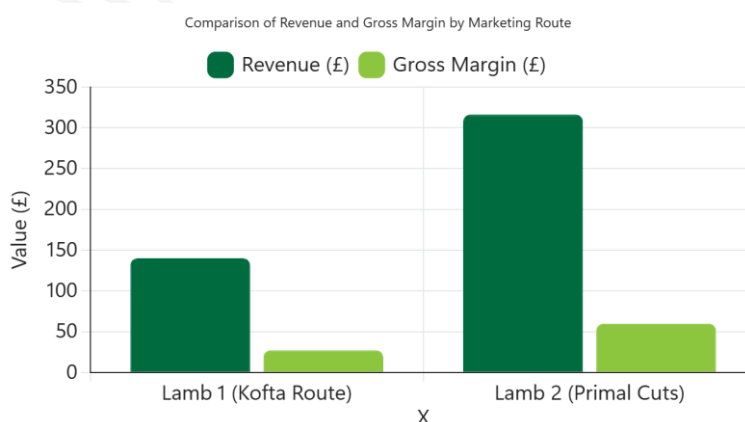
Development Manager, brought a wealth of industry experience and insight to the meeting. A qualified butcher by trade, Gordon manages both the **Scotch Butchers' Club** and **Scotch Beef Club**, working closely with Scottish processors and stakeholders across the red meat supply chain.

As part of the event, Gordon delivered an interactive **Scotch Lamb butchery demonstration**, highlighting the differences between **in-spec and out-of-spec lamb carcasses**. Using two half carcasses – one from an **in-spec** lamb weighing **22.3kg** and another from a **lighter 16.1 kg lamb** – he demonstrated how **carcass weight and specification** can influence **value throughout the supply chain**.

Attendees were given a practical insight into **carcass grading, processor price points** and the range of traditional cuts that can be produced from each carcass. The demonstration also explored the **impact of wastage**, with both lambs weighed and costed to allow a direct comparison of their **commercial value**.

This sparked valuable discussion around the importance of meeting **market specifications** and how producing the right type of lamb can help **maximise returns**.

Revenue and Margin Comparison



The **chart above** compares the estimated revenue and gross margin achieved from the two lamb marketing routes. Although **Lamb 1** was classified as **out-of-spec** and **unsuitable** for premium primal cuts, processing the meat into value-added products such as **koftas** still generated a positive margin. **Lamb 2, meeting specification** and marketed through **primal cuts**, delivered the highest overall return and **profit**.



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