

New Entrants to Farming Programme



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Case Study

James & Tamara Sinclair



'Go to open days and training courses as there are so many different ways to farm and while family members are great for advice there are always new ideas and new technologies that they may not have come across'

Being proactive looking for land

A short biog...

James and Tamara were both raised on farms. Tamara grew up on a small farm in Northern Ireland before her family moved to Caithness in 2001. She has always wanted to have her own cattle but starting anew was really the only option. James's family have a larger holding consisting of cattle and sheep but, again, with limited opportunity to farm at home he was in the same position.

The couple knew the previous tenant of Governors Farm was no longer actively farming and James approached the landlord to enquire about his intentions for the land. Fortunately he agreed to them becoming tenants on a five year lease. The holding comprises 42 acres of permanent grassland, currently with 2 sheds both in need of repair.

The couple have 4 cows and 2 bulling heifers - choosing the Luing breed for their hardiness and suitability to the ground. There are also 16 Hill Cheviot and Shetland sheep, also chosen to suit the land.

They feel that the farm is currently at maximum stocking. So, other income is required. James is now self-employed as an agricultural/plant mechanic. This adds flexibility when trying to improve the farm. Meanwhile Tamara looks after their young family and is a relief carer.

What is your main motivation to farm?

We wanted to do something as a family and what could be better than something we both love doing.

We want to work towards something together and taking satisfaction from setting and achieving our own goals. It's a great environment to raise a family and it teaches them that hard work can pay off.

What has been your biggest challenge as a new entrant?

The biggest challenge to date was not having an understanding of the paper work required. For example, they

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had to learn how and when to register calves, fill in an IACS form and keep sheep records.

What hurdles have you had to overcome?

A further challenge is having limited income. We are using our skills and experience to try and overcome this issue. For example we have bought a second hand cattle crush in need of repair—this is where James’s welding/repair skills were really useful. We have also bought a digger so we can do our own ditching/drainage/landscaping. This cuts contractors costs whilst also recouping some of the cost by hiring it out/contracting.

We have been trying to increase the acres rented. Hopefully we can find the right opportunity soon.

What financial & advisory assistance have you received?

We received advice at the start from our local SAC office.

We were also part of a New Entrants to Farming group (Caithness area) and have attended a number of Open Days.

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

Take every opportunity available.

Don’t give up looking and trying to get your foot on the ladder as you don’t know when your efforts will pay-off.

Keep trying. Even if you get ten rejections it’s that one ‘yes’ that will make the difference to you.

Learn from your experiences, adjust and move forward.



What are your future ambitions?

We would love to be able to expand and acquire more land and invest in more stock.

Being able to secure our tenancy on a longer tenure is also important for peace of mind.

Starting up on our own will hopefully prepare us for the responsibilities of managing a larger farming area and business one day - by becoming more familiar with the paperwork side, gaining a better understanding of the theory, as well as building on vital practical experience.

New Entrants to Farming “get with the” Programme

There is a network of new entrants across the country at various stages of developing their businesses. You can join in:

- www.facebook.com/NewEntrants
- www.fas.scot/new-entrants/
- Regional workshops

For more info contact Kirsten Williams, Consultant, SAC Consulting, Clifton Road, Turriff, 01888 563333, Kirsten.Williams@sac.co.uk

There are useful free resources on the website too:

- Case studies—learning from the experiences of other new entrants.
- Guidance notes—benefit from advice tailored to assist new entrants to farming.
- Also see www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/NewEntrantsToFarming

