



THE ROYAL HIGHLAND AND AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY OF SCOTLAND

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Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

Sir

I am dismayed by the Edinburgh News front-page (26th January) City Cracking Down on Eating Meat. The timing was particularly at odds as we have just celebrated Burns night - a salute to our bard, but also to our seasonal food produced locally and celebrated globally.

What strikes me as particularly worrying is the growing narrative that meat and dairy are the main driver of our climate emergency with the Plant-Based Treaty presented as the 'solution' to our environmental woes.

As an industry we are only too aware of our responsibility to cut carbon emissions and our sector is driving forward many innovative ways in which to achieve this, while protecting consumers right to choose what they wish to eat.

The Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland is a membership organisation made up of 16000 farmers and rural people.

We are concerned that the simplistic view that a shift to plant-based diets would significantly reduce the city's consumption-based emissions. What this evidence fails to consider is that 80% of Scottish land is grass or rough grazing which is not suitable for crops but ideal for livestock. Furthermore, grass grazed by livestock absorbs carbon from the atmosphere and captures it in the soil. The inconvenient truth is the way red meat is produced in Scotland is not directly comparable to international red meat production systems, but we are simply not being listened to.

It is our view that Council and city leaders have a duty to ensure that evidence used to contribute towards decision making is evidenced and balanced. Rather than cancelling red meat consumption altogether should the Council not be taking the socially and economically responsible approach of sourcing locally produced products? Locally produced red meat has less impact on the environment and has great local economic impact than a globally produced avocado.

We appreciate this is a complex matter and would extend an invitation to decision makers to come and meet our farmers and their representatives and let's trash out a better solution that unites rather than divides us by what we choose to eat.

Edinburgh may seem far removed from rural Scotland, but the decisions taken here will have far-reaching economic and social implications. Let's not forget the Royal Highland Show contributes £39.5 million to the city's economy each year, that's more than Hogmanay. It is ironic to think that the world's most respected agricultural show could be held in a city that actively discourages meat and dairy farming!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Laidlaw', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alan Laidlaw
Chief Executive