

# Joint Ventures for Landowners and New Farmers



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## Case Study Jade Brown



*Leased Grazing allowed Jade to achieve her dream of having her own livestock*

**"I took every chance I could to help out on the farm and the farm manager and estate owners have encouraged me all the way"**

**"Forest Enterprise Scotland have been really helpful"**

## Forest Enterprise Scotland's release of land gives New Entrants a start in farming

Helping out the neighbours provides inspiration for young Argyll farmer

Jade Brown is from a family who live and work in the countryside. She was brought up on a small west Highland estate where her father is the gamekeeper responsible for deer stalking, pheasant shoots and fishing on a popular salmon river. Her mother helps manage domestic arrangements for shooting and fishing parties and holiday makers who come and stay on the estate.

From an early age Jade was keen to get involved and was often seen out with her father checking the birds or helping stock the fishing lochs. The estate also has a farming enterprise with a flock of sheep and a fold of Highland cattle. It was helping out the farm manager that Jade discovered her love of dealing with livestock.

All through holidays and weekends Jade would volunteer to help out on the farm. As a result of her enthusiasm and willingness to learn

when she left school, the estate owners offered her a modern apprenticeship which would give her a qualification in farming.

The next couple of years were spent split between working on farm and attending college resulting in Jade completing the apprenticeship and gaining a SVQ3 in agriculture. She continued to work for the estate after the apprenticeship was finished but Jade was keen to pursue further qualifications so the estate agreed to support her going onto an HNC course to further her development.

"The estate owners were brilliant" said Jade "they allowed me to work when I wasn't attending college even though there really wasn't a job there"

Once Jade completed the HNC she had to think about what she wanted to do now. With her future career in mind she decided it would be a good idea to gain more varied experience and started to look for work elsewhere.

## Multiple Skills are Required on Today's Farming Enterprises

Jade spotted a job advert in the local paper for a large estate on the Ardnamurchan peninsula that was looking for a shepherd to look after their flock of hill sheep. Jade felt she was well qualified so quickly sent in her application and after an interview was given the job of shepherd on the remote estate.

The estate had, like many others, various income streams. As well as the sheep flock there was a herd of Highland cattle and holiday letting cottages. Jade quickly found that the job was much more than looking after a flock of hill sheep! Saturday morning was often spent checking the sheep first thing then back to base for a quick wash and change out of outdoor clothes and off to clean holiday cottages for a new batch of visitors in preparation for welcoming them to the estate.

Having applied for a job as shepherd Jade was asked if she minded having to work in other aspects of the business. "Not at all" she replied "It's typical of this type of small estate, everyone has to muck in where required to keep the business going. It was the same where I grew up and it was all valuable experience for my CV"

Jade spent a year working on Ardnamurchan and, although she enjoyed it, she missed her local community. When her local college started to offer an HND in Agriculture course Jade jumped at the chance to further her studies and move nearer home again. She spent the next year juggling work and study. Working on farms where she could find it and using her experience helping out on the tourism part of the Ardnamurchan estate work to get a job in a local hotel, enabled Jade to support herself through the HND.

## Spotting an Opportunity

All through her childhood Jade had dreamt of having her own land and livestock. The hard work and long days spent working and studying were with a long term goal in mind - one day getting her own farm.



*Jade will put her Hebridean ewes to a carefully chosen Cheviot tup*

Jade spotted an advert by Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) offering grazing land for lease in various parts of north Argyll. There were some fields available in a small glen not too far from where she lives so Jade applied to FES to lease the fields so she could realise the dream of having her own livestock.

Jade was delighted to be offered five fields totalling around 16 Ha of rough grazing in the beautiful but remote Glen Orchy and she took on the lease in April 2018. The lease is a five year seasonal grazing lease for up to 30 sheep. The land, like much of north Argyll, is often wet and boggy in places with plenty of rushes competing with the grass. There is good shelter with conifer plantations marching the fields in places as well as small wooded areas contained within the perimeters offering livestock a chance to get out of the often inclement Argyll weather. The fields are spread out with four lower lying better grazing fields in two locations near the valley floor with a hill grazing field further up the side of the glen on much higher ground.

"FES have been really helpful" said Jade "They have done some good drainage work on the fields and been happy to advise on possible improvements and offering further help where they can".

Having signed the lease, Jade wasted no time looking for sheep to buy for her new venture. She looked at both the auction mart and buying direct from local farmers. Using her local contacts Jade purchased 11 Hebrideans from a nearby farm and 10 Blackface X Cheviots with lamb at foot from the estate she was brought up on. She went on to buy a further 9 pure Blackface from the local mart.



*Jades Cheviot X Blackface are well used to the conditions in the area*

“Buying from a local farm means you know what conditions the stock are used to” said Jade “The Hebrideans were from a hill flock that I knew to be very hardy and hefted to hill conditions and the Blackface X’s were from my home farm with similar fields to my new place so no worries about them surviving the conditions”

Having chosen her breeding stock Jade has purchased a Cheviot tup for the coming season. She plans to put all her breeding ewes to this tup. “The farm manager from the estate helped me chose a tup with the right attributes” said Jade “we looked at his physical build and EBVs to find one that would give a smaller more slender lamb suitable for the smaller Hebridean ewes but still have the good meat giving properties expected of this breed”.

## Planning for the Future

Jade plans to make further improvements to the grazing by getting the rushes mowed on the accessible parts of the land. Keeping the rushes cut will improve the quality and quantity of the available grass. “Ideally lime would be spread to further improve grass and reduce grow back of rushes but the costs are too much” said Jade “It cost a fortune to get a lorry load of lime delivered and then you have the further cost of spreading therefore making it a no go for most small farms in the area”

The estate farm manager has offered to mow the rushes in exchange for some of Jades time helping him on the farm. “Farmers often help each other out by exchanging skills and labour” commented Jade “cash is often in short supply and this sort of mutual help is essential to keep farming going in the area”.

Jade is planning a farming model traditional to the area by producing spring born lambs for sale in early

autumn. These lamb are sold to ‘finishers’ who take the lambs and feed them up in preparation for slaughter.

There has been a trend recently where farmers are finishing their own lambs and looking to sell direct to retailers/restauranteurs but Jade is cautious about this sales model. “I have been asked by a local hotel about buying my lamb” said Jade “but having no abattoir locally adds a lot to the costs so, although I have not ruled it out, I will need to do some careful costings before I would go down that road”

The leased land will not give Jade a sufficient income so she plans to sell her services as roving shepherd able to help out at gathering ,shearing etc. “Bigger farms often hire in help at peak times” said Jade “and I have let it be known in the area I am available for casual work and I have already had enquiries for the season ahead”.

Jade would eventually like to add cattle to her livestock and is looking out for more land so she can achieve this aim. Ultimately she would like a farm to call her own where she can lay down roots and achieve her life’s ambition.

“I have always wanted to farm for myself and now I feel I am really getting there”

## Forest Enterprise Scotland

### The Landlord’s Perspective

Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) is an agency of Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) and manages the National Forest Estate (NFE). FES is a member of the Farming Opportunities for New Entrants (FONE) working group, set up by the Scottish Government with the aim of maximising the amount of publicly owned land used to help the farmers of the future. FES recognises that new entrants drive innovation and best practice, improve efficiencies, contribute towards the economic vitality of the sector and generally are vital for the future of the industry in Scotland. FES has identified that it is well-placed to offer short-term vacant land opportunities on the NFE, where this fits with the organisations wider objectives.

These units are areas of land which generally have no house or buildings. They tend to be grazing land and the application system is





*FES land for lease on the banks of the River Orchy*

weighted favourably towards New Entrants. FES uses a transparent scoring system that looks at a number of criteria including New Entrant status. However, in some cases New Entrants may not be able to deliver our desired outcomes therefore the scoring matrix does not exclude more established farmers. For instance, a land parcel may need to be grazed with cattle for only a few months in late summer to meet environmental objectives – it would be unusual for New Entrants to have other land to move the cattle on to and many New Entrants do start out with sheep.

FES has no strict definition as to the size and type of these units and this will vary depending on the resources available. The basic remit is to provide a business opportunity to a new entrant while meeting with wider land management objectives that FES may have.

Most starter units are let on Short Limited Duration Tenancies (SLDT's) of 5 years. There are occasions where the tenure is shorter due to medium term objectives for the land, or indeed longer where FES has identified that agricultural use is a long term objective.

FES has many decades of experience as a landlord to tenant farmers. We want to show how forestry and agriculture can complement each other in rural Scotland and that is one reason why we are pro-active in creating a good working relationship with our tenant farmers.



For details on other routes in to the industry:  
<https://www.fas.scot/new-entrants/guidance-notes/>



## Top tips

1. Don't underestimate the value of your time. If you need a bit of help or are short of a bale or bag of feed and are short on cash offer your time instead.
2. Don't be afraid to ask. Farmers are usually happy to share their experiences and an offer to help can give you valuable experience.
3. Listen to advice but don't be afraid to go with your own instincts. Sometimes you know what is best for you.

## 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](https://www.facebook.com/NewEntrants)
- [www.fas.scot/new-entrants/](https://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](mailto: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](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/NewEntrantsToFarming)