

## Case study

# Guided Growth: Mentoring for New Farmers

Support provided by FAS: Identifying a suitable mentor and providing funding support



Name: **Lynn Wyllie**

Lynn Wyllie began her farming journey with a simple but powerful goal: to become more self-sufficient by producing her own food. As a complete newcomer to farming, Lynn recognised the value of expert guidance and applied for support through the Scottish Farm Advisory Service's New Entrant Mentoring Programme. This case study explores how mentoring helped Lynn build confidence, develop practical skills, and improve both the welfare of her animals and the sustainability of her farm.

### How did you get started in farming?

We got started in farming because we had a strong personal goal to become more self-sufficient and provide as much of our own food as possible. It began quite simply with beekeeping, which felt like a natural first step. From there, we added a small flock of chickens to supply us with eggs, and that quickly grew into a deeper interest in livestock. Eventually, we took the plunge and got our first flock of Soay sheep. Each step built on the last, and before we knew it, we were fully immersed in small-scale farming.

### Why did you apply for mentoring support?

We applied for mentoring support primarily to help us with our Soay sheep, as we were completely new to farming and had no

background in agriculture. We didn't know any other farmers personally, so we felt quite isolated and unsure if we were doing things correctly. Having someone with experience to guide us through the basics, and the not-so-basics, seemed like a really valuable opportunity. We knew we had a lot to learn, and we wanted to make sure we were giving our animals the best care possible while also setting ourselves up for success.

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## How did you find your mentor?

Before we even got our sheep, we attended a course on Soay sheep management at The Lintmill, which is an organic and sustainable farm in South Lanarkshire run by Deborah and Colin Richardson-Webb. The course was incredibly informative and gave us a lot of confidence. Deborah, who led the course, was so knowledgeable and approachable that we kept in touch. When we later found out about the mentoring programme, it felt natural to ask if she would be willing to mentor us. Thankfully, she agreed, and her support has been a huge part of our journey.

**“Deborah helped us with pretty much every aspect of managing the farm.”**

## What did your mentor help you with?

Deborah helped us with pretty much every aspect of managing the farm. She guided us through the legal requirements we needed to meet, helped us understand how to keep proper records, and pointed us toward funding opportunities we wouldn't have found on our own.

On the practical side, she taught us how to handle the sheep from catching, roeing, footcare, tagging, castration, lambing, and self-slaughter. She also gave us advice on parasite control, monitoring body condition, and making sure their diet was balanced. Her support gave us the confidence to manage our flock effectively.

## What benefits do you anticipate for your business as a result of mentoring?

We expect to see financial benefits, especially from being made aware of funding opportunities that we wouldn't have known about otherwise. Deborah also helped us with sourcing better quality animal feed at more affordable prices, which will make a big difference in the long run.

Beyond the financial side, the improvements in animal welfare are just as important to us. We now feel much more confident in our ability to care for our animals properly, which means healthier livestock and a more sustainable farm overall.

## Would you recommend FAS support services to other farmers?

Yes! It really has been invaluable to us. When you're just starting out, it's easy to feel overwhelmed or unsure if you're doing things right. Having someone experienced to turn to when things go wrong or when you just need a second opinion makes a huge difference. Deborah's support meant we never felt alone in the process, and we avoided a lot of common mistakes. I'd recommend the FAS mentoring programme to anyone new to farming or crofting – it's a brilliant way to build confidence and learn from someone who's been there before.

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