

LANARKSHIRE BEEF producer Tommy Taylor beat off the cream of the North-east to win the award for the best Scotch steak at the Royal Highland Show.

No fewer than 11 of the 12 finalists in the annual McIntosh Donald/Tesco steak competition came from cattle consigned from the North-east, but Tommy, who farms with his mother, Jean and brother, Allan, at Heatheryhall, Thankerton, Biggar, carried off the top award with a steak from a 371.6kg Blonde cross steer bought as a store at Lanark mart and bred by Archie Clark, Woodlands, Lesmahagow. The steer graded -U3L.

“It is unbelievable – we never thought we would win,” said Tommy, after being presented with the QMS Rosebowl and cash prize of £1000 by Rural Affairs CabSec, Richard Lochhead.

The Taylor family’s success was tinged with sadness because of the absence of Tommy and Allan’s father, also Tommy, who had entered a steak which reached the final line-up just shortly before his sudden death three years ago.

The family finish 1200 cattle and 2000 lambs a year – most of which go to McIntosh Donald’s Portlethen meat plant – on their 800-acre farm. Cattle are finished on silage, straw, barley, wheat dark grains and waste vegetables.

Tesco meat director, Stan Burns, who was one of the judges, said any one of the 12 steaks in the final would have been a worthy winner. The steaks were selected from the sirloins of 39 steers and 20 heifers chosen on visual inspection at the preliminary judging at the Portlethen plant last month.

The steak were grilled on the Tesco stand at the show and assessed for flavour, texture and tenderness by an expert eating panel which included Tesco senior meat buyer, John Driscoll, QMS chairman, Jim McLaren and The Scottish Farmer’s editor, Alasdair Fletcher, as well as Mr Burns.