

Dannevirke news



Cows at peace step up to plate

By Christine McKay
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Happy, well-fed, content cows make great steaks, Dannevirke lifestyle farmers Karen and Kim Phelps believe.

The Waitahora couple's high regard for their Hinterwald cattle was confirmed when they were named semifinalists in the annual Beef + Lamb New Zealand Steak of Origin competition.

"It's exciting, especially when you think that almost 300 entries were received for the competition and we're amongst the top 20 per cent who have made it through to the next stage," Mrs Phelps said. "The Hinterwald are an exciting breed and we see huge potential. It's taken us five years to get to this stage, but it's an investment."

The Phelps' lifestyle block is just 9.3ha, with two paddocks and a gully with trees and native bush, with only 6.5ha suitable for grazing their rare Hinterwald cattle.

Although the drought has taken its toll this year, with the couple forced to reluctantly sell off some of their breeding stock, they're determined to lead the way in developing this Swiss/German breed in New Zealand.

"We sold our stock online and couldn't believe the response. Because they're rare, they're only going to become even more sought after," Mr Phelps said.

"I'm chuffed we've reached the semifinals of the Steak of Origin... these are great lifestyle block animals and their meat is brilliant. It's well marbled, tender and full of flavour. When you taste it you know it's something special, it's 'wow'."

Despite having full time jobs — Mrs Phelps is a teacher at Weber School and her husband runs his own business in Dannevirke — the couple are determined to boost the breed in New Zealand.

"Currently our Hinterwalds are 7/8ths pure-bred, the highest in New Zealand and we have to be very selective," Mr Phelps said.

The couple were drawn to the breed because they can cope with hilly ground and are good at foraging for grass. "They're easy to manage," Mr Phelps said.



IDYLIC SETTING: Karen and Kim Phelps of Waitahora with some of their Hinterwald cows, Isabella, Jessie and Jana.
PHOTO/CHRISTINE MCKAY DAN13788

And with the farmlet run on organic principles, although not organically certified, the herd grazes on pastures of herbal lay, including chicory, tonic plantain and lucerne.

"Our neighbours look over the fence and think the animals look good, considering they're in a weed paddock," he said.

"Our animals have never seen a chemical drench or antibiotic. We buy in non organic hay because there's a huge cost for the organic variety, but we've only had the vet out once in the eight years we've been here and our calving rate is 100 per cent," Mr Phelps said.

The couple receive a good price for their stock's meat, sold mainly to friends, well above the beef schedule, Mrs Phelps said.

"Our friends get very good quality meat at a price much less than what they would spend on

mince," she said.

With faith in their breed and the knowledge a Hinterwald beast took out last year's supreme Steak of Origin award, the Phelps are quietly confident they will be in the finals.

Their animal, 18-month steer Pierre was fed well, but received no special treatment and is definitely no "designer" cow, Mrs Phelps said.

"We're just interested in rare breeds. Our chickens and turkeys are all rare breeds too," she said.

The semifinalist steaks have all been through rigorous scientific testing at Carne Technologies and tomorrow a panel of judges, comprising chefs and food writers will make the difficult choice of deciding which 20 beef sirloin steaks will go through to the grand final at the Beef Expo in Feilding next month.

TASTY: Pierre, the 18-month Hinterwald steer owned by Kim and Karen Phelps of Waitahora. Steaks from the cattle beast have made it through to the semifinals of the Steak of Origin competition.
PHOTO/SUPPLIED



MOO-VING ALONG: The Phelps herd of Hinterwalder cattle with Wwoofer assistant Brian, Karen Phelps and Wwoofer Cori. The Wwoofers (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) workers are from the US.
PHOTO/SUPPLIED

Briefly

Noisy nuisance

The Tararua District Council received 92 complaints in March — 81 were for noise. Councillors have been told callouts to noise complaints were sometimes to repeat offenders. A regular caller also complains about wind farm noise and another about noise from a factory. With our hot summer, a number of calls were in regard to bees and wasps.

More unemployed

Tararua district councillor Brenda Dodunski has reported 36 more people in the Tararua have been placed in work. However, Ministry of Development figures show a 3.4 per cent rise in the number of benefit claimants in the district, with a 15.6 rise in unemployment, with 30 more people registered as unemployed.

Woodville-Pahiatua Racing Club will host the GREAT KIWI RURAL EXPO WOODVILLE RACE COURSE THURSDAY MAY 9

Woodville Pahiatua Racing Club Inc invites everyone, especially our farming community for an enjoyable day of racing and fun activities

PLUS

A great display and exhibits of what our rural traders can offer our Tararua community

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- Lucky numbers and spot prizes • Punters Club – Tui Girls
- Undie, Gumboot 100 Race – (bring your own gumboots)
- Betting voucher giveaways • Guest speakers, music
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Proud to support the Woodville-Pahiatua Racing Club Race Meeting Thursday 9th May 2013

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